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VILLAGE LECTURES  
ON THE  
Sacraments and Occasional Services  
of the Church.

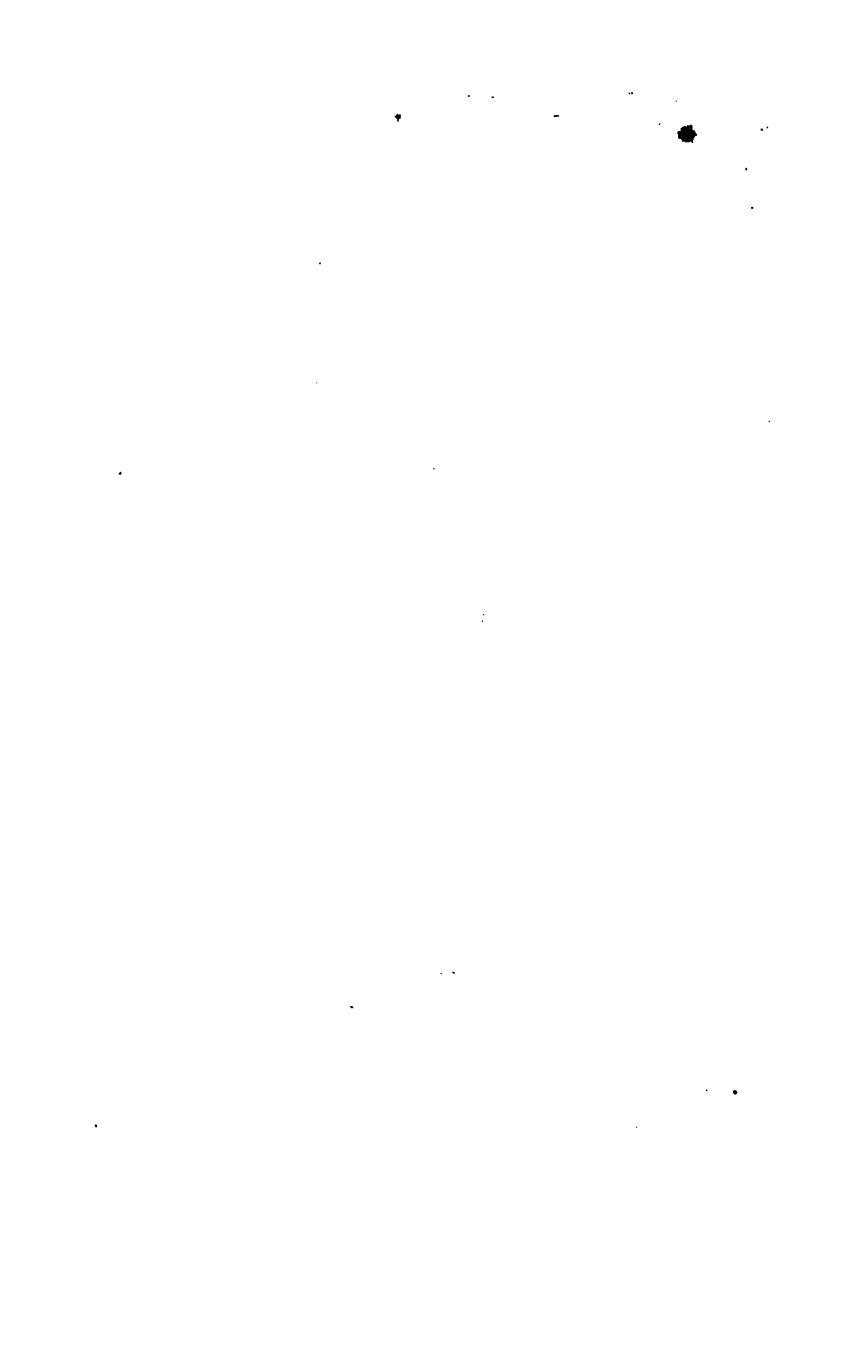
By ALFRED POTT, M.A.,  
*Fellow of S. Mary Magdalen College,  
Vicar of Cuddesdon, and Principal of the Theological  
Training College for the Diocese of Oxford.*

LONDON: JOSEPH MASTERS.

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# VILLAGE LECTURES

ON THE

## Sacraments and Occasional Services of the Church.



BY ALFRED POTT, M.A.,

FELLOW OF S. MARY MAGDALEN COLLEGE, AND VICAR OF CUDDESDON,  
AND PRINCIPAL OF THE THEOLOGICAL TRAINING COLLEGE FOR THE DIOCESE  
OF OXFORD.

LONDON:

JOSEPH MASTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET,  
AND NEW BOND STREET.

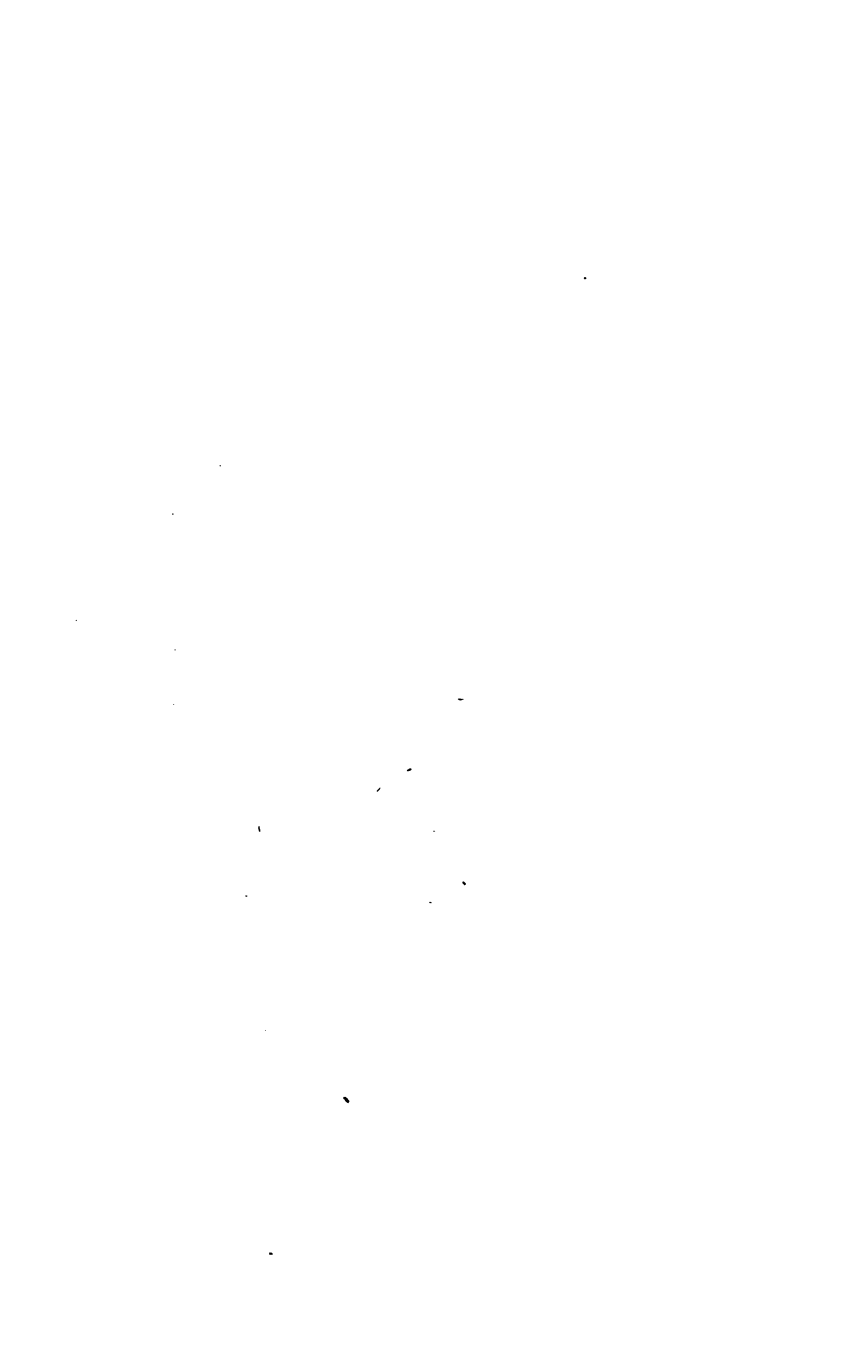
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**LONDON:**  
**PRINTED BY JOSEPH MASTERS AND CO.,**  
**ALDERSGATE STREET.**

TO  
THE CHURCHWARDENS  
AND OTHER FAITHFUL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH  
WITHIN THE PARISH OF CUDDESDON,  
THE FOLLOWING ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN SOME OF THE PRIVILEGES  
AND BLESSINGS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS VERY  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.





## P R E F A C E.

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THE present Volume is intended as a companion to one published two years since, on the subject of Confirmation. The Lectures in both Volumes were delivered to the same Congregation, and are printed almost exactly as they were delivered. The want of very simple statements of Church teaching is, I have reason to know, more and more felt by the Clergy, and is the ground of the present publication, as it was of the former.

CUDDESDON,  
*July, 1854.*



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# Lectures on the Sacraments,

ETC.

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## LECTURE I.

### THE CHURCH.

EPHESIANS I. 22, 23.

“ HE HATH PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET, AND GAVE HIM TO BE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY, THE FULNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL.”

THIS is the way in which S. Paul speaks of the exaltation into glory of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. This was the fruit of His death: His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, were not so many steps, by which the LORD was separated from His brethren, but steps by which His union with them was made more perfect and entire. Not as though having put on the flesh of man for a time, and having in that flesh done a mighty work, He then put off the tabernacle and became as He had been before; but being once Incarnate, Incarnate does He ever remain—the first-born of many brethren—the human Intercessor at the FATHER’S throne—the human Head of the Church

militant on earth, of the Church triumphant in heaven.

For when He ascended up on high, according to His own promise, He did not leave desolate or alone those who had seen Him go up. It was for this, that He ascended up, that by the pouring out of His HOLY SPIRIT He might found a Church imperishable and eternal. It is to this that I wish specially to turn your thoughts. Why it was that without His going away the Comforter could not come, is one of the mysteries of the Godhead. But so it was. Without that outpouring there could be no Church, without the departure of the SON, the HOLY GHOST could not come. By His going away for a little time in bodily presence, and returning again in His Spirit at Pentecost, He set up that, of which He had before spoken to His Apostles, a Church for all time, all people, all lands: a Church wherein He Himself should dwell in real and living presence even to the end of the world.

Certainly this is a truth of GOD's word, which we very imperfectly indeed bring home to our hearts. "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," is an article of the Creed very little thought of, very little understood. Consider what the common belief about it is, and see how very indistinct and uncertain it will be found. If you ask a man what it is to be a Christian, he will answer most likely if he answer at all, that it is to believe in the life and death of JESUS CHRIST, to believe that He will come again to judge, to hope that we shall be saved through His merits. All which is true, but not all the truth; for it leaves out a very important part of the whole. See how little in such a man's mind is there, of the thought of the LORD's presence *now—here*,—amongst us: how little thought of the ways in which that presence

is brought home with life and cleansing to each man's soul and conscience. And this forgetfulness of the presence of our blessed LORD amongst us in reality and in power shows itself in many ways. We learn to look upon Christianity as a particular sort of teaching, very good and very profitable no doubt, and good for a man to know, and still better to live by. Now of course Christianity has its teaching; all religions must: but it is a teaching which should lead to something far higher than itself, to a longing after the presence of God, and an earnest desire for union with CHRIST; God is present, the LORD is near, waiting to manifest Himself to His people. But we, forgetting this, fall into a sort of Christianity, stopping far short of what Christian teaching should lead us to. With how many of us a love of coming to Church is only a love of hearing a Sermon; how altogether has the worship of a present LORD in His holy temple become a thing unknown! What is a Sermon at the best, but a telling of blessings and a pointing out the way: but what a miserable mistake to love to hear another talk of blessings which we do not care to enjoy, to love to hear another talk of a way, which we care not to walk in. Yet is not this exactly so with those who love a Sermon, and never find the blessing of which all Sermons tell—never find the presence of God with them in prayer? A means of grace we call preaching, and quite rightly, but what do the very words themselves teach us? A means of grace must needs be something to lead us to that which is higher—to the grace itself. That grace is union with CHRIST Himself: not to hear of an absent LORD, but to enjoy the presence of One Who is near at hand—of One Who is about us, and around us, and within us.



Surely we could never have fallen into such miserable mistakes about Prayers and Sermons, had we not practically forgotten that the Church is the body of our present LORD, the fulness of Him, that filleth all in all.

We may find the same sort of mistake running through other parts of our religious belief and our religious feelings. There are many to whom Baptism seems to be only a reminder about Christian duties which are to be done at some future time, and Christian blessings which are to be obtained by some other means. In like manner there are some to whom the Holy Communion seems only a reminder about the sacrifice of the Cross: that is, both the Sacrament of our Regeneration and of our Redemption, seem but another kind of sermon, a particular sort of preaching. I will not stop just now to show you how great a mistake all this is. It is because we have lost sight of the presence of the LORD JESUS in His Church, that we have got notions so untrue about the Church's Sacraments.

And further, as this forgetfulness of the LORD's presence has lowered and corrupted our view of our relationship to God and of His nearness to us, even so has it done the same by our sense of earthly responsibilities and human ties. How many a father is there in a Christian village, who recognizes and confesses and acts up to his duties towards those children whom God has lent unto him, and for whom God will ask an account? How many sponsors in a Christian parish think of what the words mean which they utter at the font? How many parents or sponsors either are careful, and thoughtful, and earnest about the confirmation of their children? How many a one has a thought for the well-being of his neighbour's child, and joins heart and soul in the prayers,

when we kneel round the font, and pray that the seed then sown may grow and bear fruit, and be gathered ripe into the garner of heaven? How many are there who look upon the marriage of Christian people as a holy and a religious act? How many a woman, whom God has spared in the perils of childbirth, kneels here to return thanks with a heart truly lifted up? Nay, at the most solemn time of all, how many are there among those who stand around the open grave, who have learned to drink in the solemn words of peace and comfort and joy, to look through the seedtime of tears to the blessedness of the ingathering which is to come?

We have got to look upon all these as common earthly things, forgetting how He, Who took our nature, has cleansed them all—how all our earthly ties, relationships, trials, blessings, are hallowed and sanctified by Him, made in Him acts of the religious life, and helps and steps on our road heavenward. We, I say, have forgotten it, but the Church speaks far otherwise. Turn, any one, to his Prayer Book, and that Prayer Book will tell him that the Church has to do with all these things. Not only will he read there of services for the ministration of the Holy Sacraments, by which men are joined to God; but also an office for marriage, for thanksgiving after child-birth, a catechism for the instruction of the young, an office for the visitation of the sick, and for the burial of the dead. All which things, of course, we all knew before, but perhaps we have never thought how the presence of such services at all is a witness on the part of the Church against all who would count such ties or such duties worldly and common things, who can forget that it is the presence of the LORD in His Church which can alone bless our every-day labour, which can alone

bless our earthly ties, and make them means for leading us to eternal glory. We have forgotten that the fulness of Him filleth "all in all."

What has been said here has been almost, or altogether, on the common forgetfulness of some great truths upon which the Christian life rests. Of what the Church of CHRIST is, and how that Church works in the salvation of souls, I shall speak hereafter. I purpose, in these lectures, taking one by one, the chief subjects of which the Prayer Book speaks in her occasional services, (i.e. in the services for special occasions,) beginning first with the nature of the Church itself, going on to the question of the two Sacraments and the LORD's Supper; speaking then successively as the subjects occur in the order of the Prayer Book, of the offices for marriages, the visitation of the sick, of Christian education, of the burial of the dead; showing you how all these offices are part of one great whole, by which the Church would teach us our relationship to CHRIST our head, all pointing to His presence, all leading us onward to the fulness of His presence in glory. May GOD bless us in this our work; may He teach us somewhat of His forgotten and neglected truth; may He knit us together in His living family below, in that bond which shall never be loosened, even when heaven and earth shall pass away.

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## LECTURE II.

## THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM.

## GENESIS XXVIII. 12.

"AND HE DREAMED, AND BEHOLD, A LADDER SET UP UPON EARTH,  
AND THE TOP OF IT REACHED TO HEAVEN."

THERE was a time, you will all remember, in the world's history, when men who had no fear of GOD before their eyes set about building a tower whose bottom should stand upon the earth and its top reach to heaven. But the work was not of GOD: the language was confounded, and the people scattered, and the place was called Babel, that is, confusion. All the while, though they saw it not, there was a way between earth and heaven: GOD had Himself provided a way, although the time for manifesting it to man's eyes had not come. For all who lived in the fear and love of GOD, from the first man who repented of his disobedience, even to those Saints who shall be CHRIST's at His coming, the LORD JESUS when He became man, opened a new and living way to the FATHER. Not a tower of man's building, for it is written that they who are called to be the Sons of GOD, "are born not of blood, nor of the will of man"—nor yet a Babel of confusion, but a path of peace and love, whereby man should come nigh to GOD.

What the Tower of Babel was not, that the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream was. You recollect he was on his flight away from his father's house, homeless, an outcast; much needing comfort and help, and the consciousness of GOD's presence. GOD gave him that con-

sciousness : GOD opened his eyes to see the spiritual world around him—to show him, that he went forth not alone or uncared for, but that ministering Spirits, GOD's Holy Angels, were going up and down between heaven and earth, doing GOD's bidding, ministering to the needs of GOD's children, helping him onwards through the troubles and dangers of this perilous world, until he too should mount that ladder, and see the face of Him Who sat above. All through that long and wearisome life of Jacob afterward, the remembrance of his dream at Bethel would be his support ; the certainty that those heavenly messengers were still around him, would be his comfort and his joy.

But it is not of the ways in which GOD was pleased in those old times to show Himself to His servants, that we speak here, but of the ways in which *now* in the Church of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, He has appointed means by which we may reach His presence. The ladder of Jacob's dream is a type and emblem of what the Church itself is now. This likeness will perhaps help us to a more just and true understanding of the nature and character of that Church.

In the last lecture we saw that we have many of us very low and very mistaken ideas on this matter, that we have very nearly let slip what those words of the Creed mean, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." We saw there some of the mistakes into which men fall about this subject. Let us try to go a step onwards, and to realise to ourselves a more correct and true view. You recollect that in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Church is called our LORD's Body, words which in themselves ought to teach us that the Church cannot be an establishment set up by men, but is of divine and heavenly

birth. A little thought will help us out of this passage also to draw some clear light, not only as to what the Church is not, but as to what it is.

Now after the LORD JESUS CHRIST had become man, and lived and died, and risen again, and ascended into heaven, for man's salvation, it might have been that it would have been enough to send into the world men to preach these great truths, that others hearing should believe them, that a book should be written about them, and spread far and wide, and men might have listened and read the Bible for themselves, and learned the way of salvation, and walked in it and so reached to heaven. It might so have pleased GOD: and some men thinking that things might have been so and ought to have been so, have taken this as the whole sum and substance of Christian teaching. But if we do not go about to plan out a way for ourselves, we shall find that this is not the way which GOD has marked out; that such a scheme of salvation is not of GOD, but is of man. Scripture teaches us that there is a Holy Catholic Church, and that through that Church and in it salvation is to be found.

I say Scripture teaches us this. For example, Scripture tells us how there was no Church in the Apostles' time, except there was in that Church a lawful ministry; that there were Apostles,<sup>1</sup> and those whom the Apostles appointed, who were the Bishops or chief officers of the Church; that there were others who were elders, also ordained by the Apostles;<sup>2</sup> that there were deacons, who were a yet lower order;<sup>3</sup> but these also chosen and sanctified by the laying on of hands. It might have been GOD's will that any should go forth, as

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 25; viii. 14; 1 Tim. i. 3; Titus i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17—28.

<sup>3</sup> Acts vi. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 8.

they would, and preach what they had learned to others. But if we take the New Testament as a revelation from God, it did not so please Him. He who had chosen a High Priest in the olden time, and ever visited with heavy judgment those who ventured to execute the Priest's office uncalled,<sup>1</sup> appointed also through the Apostles in whom His SPIRIT was, a lawful and regular ministry in the Church, which is the Body of His SON; that in that Body there should be no schism, but a regular, orderly, duly appointed course of ministers, taking up and handing on the right succession and the lawful call.

Once more, it might have pleased the wisdom of the Great Founder of the Church, that it should be enough for a man to hear the Word and believe, and so be saved. But it was not so. If the Church were a mere collection of men, established by men as a convenient arrangement, men might choose this or that way of receiving other men into their body; but the Church is of God, the Body of CHRIST; and no one can be joined to that Body but in God's own way. That way is the Sacrament of Baptism: we do not stop now to prove this; but observe only that the Church has this Sacrament, because it is a Church: a Church is a living body, and God's grace comes down through that body's appointed channels.

Once more: it might have pleased the LORD JESUS CHRIST to feed His faithful servants with spiritual food in any way which they found each for himself most convenient and profitable. If Christian men were so many separate persons with no bond of union, it might be so. But it is not. If again we take Scripture for a guide, Scripture will tell us of a Sacrament by which our souls

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xvi. 31; 1 Sam. xiii. 13; 2 Sam. vi. 7; 2 Chron. xxvi. 18.

are kept in the Church, as well as of a Sacrament by which they are brought in. Baptism joins us, the Holy Communion feeds us. The one alike as needful as the other. This too, we do not stop to prove, but only just point to it. The Church is a sacramental body—it has ministers through whom, and Sacraments in which, the life-giving graces of the LORD's Incarnation flow down to man.

Some of this may, perhaps be new to us: some of it we may not be quite willing to receive: if it be so, it shows two things, first how true it is to say that a belief in the Holy Catholic Church is a very weak belief amongst us; and next how ready men are with the Bible in their hands to blind their eyes to the Bible's plain words. For these are all of the wondrous things of His law; only we need His grace to open our eyes to read them. We are encompassed with blessings, which we know not. We are like Jacob unenlightened, before his eyes were opened to see the ladder. God was near him, and angels going up and down, only his eyes were closed. So it is with us, when Church blessings are ours, and we set little store by those blessings. The ladder set upon earth and reaching unto heaven is an exact figure of what the Body of our LORD is to His faithful members. Down the ladder of the Church's ministrations are graces manifold coming down; and going up to heaven also the constant sweet savour of prayer and praise. The Body of CHRIST the Church is likewise: the Head our LORD Himself; and even as from the head all life and power and feeling springs, so through the appointed channels of the Church's office flow from the heavenly head, life, and strength, to its earthly members. Let us not choke those channels by an evil heart of unbelief. Let



us bless God Who has knit us into that body : bless Him, Who has kept us from falling out of it : pray that we who have been once grafted in, "may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head even CHRIST: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in Love."<sup>1</sup>

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### LECTURE III.

#### BAPTISM.—ITS NECESSARY OBLIGATION.

##### GENESIS VII. 23.

"NOAH ONLY REMAINED ALIVE, AND THEY THAT WERE WITH HIM IN THE ARK."

GOD had spoken beforehand to that evil generation of the works of destruction He would bring upon the earth. For one hundred and twenty years was the ark preparing ; for a hundred and twenty years Noah's preaching sounded in men's ears ; and the uprising of the ark itself told how he, who preached, believed the words he spoke. And men doubted, questioned, and mocked. Were there not other ways to escape if a flood did come ? were there not high hills, and housetops, and towers ? why take so much trouble ? But the flood came and all were swept away ; their fancied refuges turned out all miserable deceptions ; they were man's invention, but the ark was GOD's own manner of saving. There was to be a small remnant delivered, but delivered only in the way, which GOD ap-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ix. 15, 16.

pointed. "Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

You will perhaps remember that S. Peter tells us how the ark, in those days, was a figure or shadow, of what the Church should be; how the Church is the ark, saving her children within her, borne up upon the waters of Baptism. You remember mention being made of these words in our Baptismal service. This verse of Genesis illustrates what we are going to speak of in this lecture, viz., the necessity of Holy Baptism. You recollect that we are going through the occasional services of the Church; we take the services for the ministration of the Sacraments first, because the Sacraments are the bonds which knit heaven and earth together, and the Sacrament of Baptism first of the two, because it is the first admission into the fold of the Church at all.

You will remember that I called the Church a Sacramental body, i.e. a body which through outward and visible signs conveys to her members inward and spiritual grace. It has pleased God so to knit together the outward and the inward. There is no Church without Sacraments, no Sacraments but in the Church. Now, because the Church is a body, there must be some appointed way of entering in; some lawful door of entrance into the sheepfold. That door is holy Baptism. We are not speaking now of the exact effect, or working, or responsibilities of the Sacrament of Baptism, but at present only of its necessity. We will see first what the Prayer Book teaches us about this necessity, and then compare that teaching with what Holy Scripture tells.

We all learned in the Catechism when we were children, that there are two Sacraments which are generally necessary to salvation. *Generally*, that is, for all men, in

all stations, callings, and positions of life ; not like some other means of grace which may be needful for one man, and not for another. For example, none can be a lawful minister of the Church, who is not ordained by a Bishop to be such : so ordination is a means of grace needful and indispensable to some men, but not *generally*, because all are not called to the ministry. But not so with Baptism ; this is the distinction which the Catechism draws between those means of grace which are needful for all, and those, which are needful only for some ; the one it calls Sacraments, the other not. So the Catechism taught us when children. Let us turn now to other parts of the Prayer Book, and read the Church's voice there. At the very beginning of the Baptismal service in the first exhortation you will read, "None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of Water and of the HOLY GHOST." Turn again to the end of the same service, and you will read in the last rubric, "It is certain by God's Word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved." Go on yet further, and you will find a service for what is called private Baptism ; so careful and earnest has the Church been that none of her children should be prevented by sickness, or early death, from passing through that door whereby alone there is passage into the ark of safety. In like manner you will find it ordered in the Burial service, that none shall be blessed by the Church in their death, who have not, through Baptism, passed into the Church in their life ; no unbaptized person shall receive Christian burial. Why ? not because the Church pronounces anything certain of the condition of those who have passed out of the world without regeneration ; but because she dares not speak words of joy, and peace,

and hope, over any, save those, who have put on the LORD JESUS CHRIST in His own appointed way.

This, then, is the teaching of the Prayer Book about the necessity of Holy Baptism. About its blessings and its responsibilities we will speak another time. It is this one point,—its needfulness for all men to salvation,—that we speak now. I have pointed out to you how the Prayer Book speaks; now compare this speaking with God's Word, and see whether they agree or no. The LORD JESUS CHRIST, through His Apostles, set up a Church on earth. It might have been that preaching was to be the one only means by which men were to be gathered into that Church: but it was not so. You remember the very last commission which the LORD gave to His Apostles before His ascension, spoke not of preaching only, but of a Sacramental bond, which was to join converted men to Himself. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," He says, not "he that believes and is converted," but "he that believeth and is baptized." Or go to His great discourse with Nicodemus, in the third chapter of S. John. How does He speak there of the Way of Life which He was opening to man? "Except a man be born of water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He does not say, mind, of the SPIRIT only, but of water and of the SPIRIT; the two knit together by the express word of God.

This was the commandment of the LORD JESUS. Turn now to the practice of His Apostles, in building up the Church which He founded. At Pentecost itself, when S. Peter preached, and men were pricked to the heart, and converted, and changed, what was it he bid them do? Did he tell them it was enough to have believed, and repented, and changed? Not at all. "Repent," he said,

and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the HOLY GHOST." When S. Paul himself, the chosen Apostle, had been converted, his heart changed, his whole man turned from being a bitter persecutor into an earnest and loving disciple, was it enough for him, even, that the inner man was so moved? Did it seem to him enough that he had tokens of the inward grace, and so could do without the outward sign? Not so: we read, (Acts ix. 18,) that he, too, "arose and was baptized." When the same Apostle sat in prison at Philippi, and the earthquake shook the prison walls, and so moved the jailor's heart that he, too, became an earnest believer, how was it that the Apostle received him into the Christian body? Even by the one appointed means: "He was baptized, he and all his, straight-way." (Acts xvi. 33.) It was thus that the Apostles, in whom the SPIRIT of the LORD so fully dwelt,—it was thus that they interpreted and enforced His words, "One LORD, one Faith, one Baptism," was their teaching; no other known entrance into the heavenly fold. The words of our Church Services are the words of Scripture,—the words of the LORD Himself. "Except a man be born of water and of the SPIRIT, he can in no wise enter into the kingdom of God."

This is one point, to gather out of our Church Services the needful obligation of Baptism. Perhaps most of us have never been tempted to doubt this truth; have never thought of there being any other way, except the one appointed Church way. Well for us if it have been so; but we cannot tell when the temptation may come, and it is good for us to be ready,—to be able to say not only, "This is the teaching of my Prayer Book and my Church," but, "this also is the sure and certain doctrine of my LORD and His Apostles."

## LECTURE IV.

## BAPTISM: ITS EFFECT AND ITS ESSENTIALS.

## GALATIANS III. 27.

“AS MANY OF YOU AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT  
ON CHRIST.”

WE have spoken of the necessity of Baptism: we go on to speak of its nature and its effects; and in doing so we will take the same order which we followed in our last lecture; that is, we will first see what the Prayer Book teaches us, and then we will compare that teaching with the words of Scripture, of our blessed LORD and His Apostles.

And going first of all to the Catechism we mark that Baptism is there ranked as one of the two Sacraments, and that a Sacrament is explained to be “an outward visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by CHRIST Himself.” In other words, if an ordinance be a Sacrament, it must needs, being so, have an inward unseen blessing as well as an outward visible form and sign. Next we observe, that this inward and unseen blessing is said to be in Baptism, “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness,” a taking out of a state of wrath and placing into a state of grace; this is spoken of as the sure and certain effect of the Sacrament of Baptism duly and rightly ministered.

Go on to the Baptismal Service, and you will observe first that in the second prayer of that service, we pray that the child to be baptized may in Baptism receive spiritual regeneration, or in other words, a new birth of

the soul. You will remember farther on, how in calling down a blessing upon the water in the font, we pray that it may be sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin; and further, that so soon as the water has been sprinkled, and the words spoken which are needful to the performance of the Sacrament, we no longer pray that a blessing may come upon the child, but we say that it has come. "Seeing now that this child *is* regenerate and grafted into the body of CHRIST's Church." And yet, once more, the Church declares in the rubric at the end of her service, "It is certain by GOD's word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved."

But let us stop here and ask ourselves whether we have ever really considered what these words and expressions mean. I have gathered together here from different parts of the Prayer Book such passages as bear upon the effect of Holy Baptism. Of its necessity we spoke before; of its responsibilities we shall speak hereafter. We are speaking now of its effect; but we shall not learn much from a few stray words gathered from prayers, which we have often heard, unless we give a little more thought to them than we mostly do to the Church services.

I will try then and put before you more at length what the true teaching about the working of the Sacrament is. The LORD JESUS CHRIST when He came into the world took upon Himself a man's nature into the Godhead: in Him, and through that human nature, we too are joined to GOD. The sin of one man separated us; the perfect righteousness of the man JESUS CHRIST re-unites us. "In Adam all die, in CHRIST all are made alive." In the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Word of the FATHER became flesh; the whole race of man for whom He stood

are joined to GOD. The life of the soul was killed by sin; the life is re-kindled, revived, made new when man is joined to CHRIST. Adam, the one father of us all, sends down, through his children, death and a curse; the LORD JESUS, who you remember is called the Second Adam, sends through all His members new fountains of life and blessing.

But to drink of that life and to be heirs of that blessing we must needs be joined to CHRIST, and we cannot join ourselves—we must be joined by some other. Plainly it must be the work of GOD, not our own work. No feeling of our own, no belief of our own, no assurance of our own, can so join us; these are all our acts, but the joining us to His SON must be the act of GOD. And so in founding a Church, by which, and in which, all should be brought into union with Himself, the LORD appointed also a direct means of union; He set up a sheep-fold, and He opened a door; He put on our nature, that we might put on His; by His Incarnation He became like unto us, by Baptism we become like unto Him.

This, in very few words, is the teaching of the Church as to the effect of Holy Baptism. Let us see whether we can find the like teaching in the word of GOD. You heard in the last lecture how everywhere the Apostles spoke of Baptism as the one needful entrance into the Church; let us see now how they speak of the effect of the Sacrament when it is received. Read, for example, (Acts xxii. 16,) how Ananias, speaking to S. Paul after his conversion, speaks of the effect which the Sacrament would have on him. "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." And the manner in which these sins are washed away, S. Paul himself points out to us in this place of the Galatians which we took for our text. "As



many of you," he says, "as have been baptized into CHRIST, have *put on* CHRIST." Mark the words, "Have put Him on," put on His renewed and purified nature, been joined to the one sinless and perfect Man; been made partaker in His perfection. Or take another passage: speaking to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xii. 13,) he says, "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body," that is, the body of the LORD JESUS, His perfect manhood. We might find many more such passages, if we would; but these are quite enough for any one who is willing to take the plain teaching of GOD's word, and not to set up something of his own devising for it.

To sum up. Baptism is the beginning of the soul's life, its regeneration, its new birth; it grafts us first into the LORD JESUS CHRIST Who is the stem, whence all the life flows; the opening of a channel, through which the water of the Spirit may run; the sowing of a seed which may hereafter grow; the kindling of a spark which may hereafter brighten into a flame. The graft may indeed die, though the stem be never so healthy; the channel may be choked, though the cistern be full; the seed may perish, the spark may be quenched. Of course all this may be; we will speak of all this more at length when we come to the responsibilities which baptized people have upon them; of course, all this may be. No one thinks that Baptism means growth in grace, perseverance, final acceptance; but it is the root and fountain out of which all these flow.

You may very likely have been tempted, and may be again, to think differently about this Holy Sacrament; you will find people in the world who feel, and think, and speak otherwise. All the more need that we have a plain, *clear view*, (so far as we can take in a great mystery,)

of what our Prayer Book teaches, and what Scripture confirms. It may seem to you a very small instrument to work so mighty a work—a little water sprinkled, a few words spoken; but remember it is not the outward human means which works the wonder, but the effectual working through these means of Him, Who can save by many or by few. No doubt it is an awful and a solemn thought that we, who are baptized Christian men, have put on the LORD JESUS: been joined to Him: united to His manhood. Yes, my brethren, awful and solemn; and therefore a true and deep view of the true doctrine of Holy Baptism is of all the most powerful to warn us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the danger of falling away, the condemnation of those who do despite to the Spirit of grace. It is an awful and a solemn thought; but resting as it does on the plain teaching of GOD'S word, let us not dare to think lightly, or to speak lightly, or to listen to those who would weaken or lower our belief in the effectual working of the blessed gift of GOD. It is our gift; let us pray that we hinder not its work in ourselves; that He Who has regenerated us through Himself will add the gifts of perseverance and acceptance at the last—"that He which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of JESUS CHRIST." Phil. i. 6.

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## LECTURE V.

## SPONSORS.

## GALATIANS VI. 5.

**"EVERY MAN SHALL BEAR HIS OWN BURDEN."**

BAPTISM, like all means of grace instituted of God, must work, as we have seen already: it cannot be fruitless—"My word shall not return unto Me void." A Sacrament must either harden or soften, either bless or curse. Even as we all feel and allow that the Sacrament of the LORD's Table does this, so ought we to believe of the Sacrament of Baptism. As a man coming to the altar steps and receiving the Sacrament of his LORD's body and blood with an impenitent, unbelieving heart, comes back from the altar a harder and a wickeder man, so the baptized Christian man, who, in after life, forgets his baptismal vows, is a man more accursed and more lost than an unbaptized heathen can be. But of this we shall speak more in our next lecture. What I speak of in this lecture is not our duties and responsibilities as concerning our own Christian vows, but the duties and responsibilities which we owe to those, who, by us, have been brought to the font.

What we have spoken of before were the necessity and the effect of Baptism: what the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself made it, viz., a necessary instrument, by which we are joined to Himself. Whatever the LORD appointed of course no man and no Church can alter; there can be no Baptism without water, no Baptism without the right *words being used*, because GOD has so ordained. Were

any Church to alter these things it would destroy the Sacrament. But over and above the water and the words, the Church requires persons to answer for the child—Sponsors as we call them—Sureties, God-parents. These the Church has ordered, and it is about these I speak at present.

You will read in the rubric that comes before the service for Public Baptism that there shall be for every “male child to be baptized two Godfathers and one Godmother, and for every female one Godfather and two Godmothers.” You all know well, how, in the service itself, there are many questions put which the Sponsors, in the name of the child, answer; and the Catechism, speaking of their office, tells us what they promised for us, and how we are bound to keep those promises.

Now, as I said before, Godfathers and Godmothers are not essential parts of Baptism, that is, it would be good Baptism still, if there were no Sponsors. This is plain; when we baptize a child in a private house, there are no Sponsors at all, because the haste and the danger does not allow of them. But private Baptism is good and lawful Baptism still; not *half Baptism*, as it is very often but quite falsely called, but full and entire Baptism. A child so baptized is a member of CHRIST, and so claims Christian burial, even though it die before it can be brought to the church. This would show us at once that Sponsors are not an essential part of the Sacrament, not part of the institution of CHRIST; and therefore, although we very often hear of Baptism, its effect and its necessity, in Scripture, we do not read of Sponsors or their duties.

Still though we do not read of them there, we know *that it was a very old custom indeed, handed down from*

ancient days, that a child brought to the font should be presented by Christian people, who were to be sureties for it. Sometimes the rule was that there should be one Sponsor, a godfather for each boy, a godmother for each girl; sometimes more were required; our Church's rule is to have three. The Church could, of course, alter the rule if it were thought good; the needful parts of the Sacrament none can ever alter, because they are the ordinances of the LORD Himself; but those which are not needful may be altered as occasion requires.

But while there are Sponsors, and we undertake the office, our duty in the matter becomes a solemn duty before GOD, which we cannot shrink from without sin. Very few of us have ever thought what these duties are. Our text may suggest a solemn thought about them: "Every man shall bear his own burden;" the baptized child his; the Sponsor his; neither one the burden of the other, but each his own before GOD. Those burdens are sometimes confused, and much mistake made about them, but each has his own real duty, which he cannot by any means be rid of.

I. There is this burden laid upon all of us; we are all bound as Christian men to become Sponsors for our neighbours' children when they need our help. It is a part of Christian duty, which we owe one towards the other. It is sometimes a very hard matter for thoughtful Christian people to find persons in whom they can trust to answer for their children. Why? not because there are not godly people about them, but because those godly people sometimes forget what Christian charity means, and shrink back from an office of brotherly love. Therefore it is that so many unfit people are seen answering *as Sponsors, who meanwhile are not even attempting at*

all to keep for themselves those promises which they so readily make for another. The burden of being Sponsor for a neighbour's child is one which we have no right to avoid. "Bear ye one another's burdens," says S. Paul, "and so fulfil the law of CHRIST."

II. Next, having undertaken the office, it is part of our burden—part of our duty—to endeavour and understand what it means. You know that a young child cannot be Sponsor for another, because they are not held fit to make promises so solemn, which they can neither understand nor perform. And yet we sometimes see grown people answering at the font with as little understanding or thought about their meaning as if they were children. Let us ask ourselves whether we have tried to think. A Sponsor has two parts of his duty, two offices; first at Baptism, next for the child after Baptism; to promise in the child's name, to see that the child knows afterwards what those promises were, and learns how he may keep them. Those promises themselves we will not speak of now; you know that they take in the whole sum of Christian obedience and Christian faith. In the child's name you undertake them first, for himself he has to perform them afterwards. Meanwhile your duty is not ended at the font; most Sponsors act and think as if it were; the child is answered for and the Baptism over, and no more thought of it; but like other forgotten duties, it stands written in God's book; you will have to answer some day whether you have tried to discharge it or no.

III. And what is that duty? Not to bear the burden of the child's sins; of course not, none can do that. Every man shall bear his own burden. Your burden is *to see that the child learn his duty, be taught the vows*

made for him, be put in the way of keeping them. Your burden is to look out for opportunities of doing good to the child's soul, using good influence with his parents, sending him where he may be brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life. Many things may hinder you very likely; you may be parted and live far away; parents may thwart and hinder you, keep their child from school and church, resist and resent all interference. If it be so, you are guiltless; the sin lies with them; you do what you can, only others oppose and contend. The sin is theirs then; but the sin is yours if you have never tried to do anything towards keeping a vow solemnly made. The Church reminds you of the duty, tells you what you owe to the child; but many forget the words as soon as they are out of the church, and are as though there were no duties between themselves and their godchildren at all.

I will give you two plain and simple rules about your duties as Sponsors, which every one of you can keep. Have by you written on a piece of paper the names of those for whom you have answered, and add from time to time a fresh name whenever you stand at the font. Keep it in some place where you will often see it; it will serve to remind you of your duty. Some perhaps would find it very hard to make such a list; they have answered for so many and forgotten their duty towards all.

Next, have some set time at which you may pray to God for the children for whom you have answered; once a week, some particular time on Sunday, call over one by one the names of your godchildren, and offer up for all a short prayer that God will bless them and help you to do your duty towards them. These two rules you could all observe; I believe they would save us from hastily

undertaking, or from selfishly refusing, or from utterly neglecting these Christian duties. There are very few who have not something to answer for in this matter. God give us grace to be more thoughtful and earnest and conscientious for the time to come.

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## LECTURE VI.

### BAPTISMAL PROMISES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

1 COR. III. 16, 17.

“KNOW YE NOT THAT YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLETH IN YOU? IF ANY MAN DEFILE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, HIM SHALL GOD DESTROY. FOR THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY, WHICH TEMPLE YE ARE.”

WE said that in Baptism we were made through the act of God, living parts of the LORD'S Body; ingrafted branches of the living Vine; temples of God the HOLY SPIRIT. This, we saw, was the effect ascribed to the Sacrament of Baptism, alike by the Prayer Book and by Holy Scripture. The human nature of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, becomes, in Baptism, our nature; out of Him, through Baptism, flow into us, His members, streams of life. You may find some people in the world who will say that this way of speaking about an outward means of grace, is a dangerous and misleading way of speaking; that it must needs lead men to rest in the thought that they have been baptized; to be satisfied with that alone; to neglect or forget the need of conversion; to lead careless lives, satisfied only that they are



baptized Christians. Now, of course it cannot really be dangerous or misleading to speak on any subject as God's Word teaches us to speak ; and we saw that this Church view of Holy Baptism was the view of Holy Scripture, as well as of the Prayer Book. Any misleading, must arise from a misuse of a true doctrine, not from its true statement. I want to show you that the highest and the truest view of the blessedness of the baptized state, can lead to no carelessness,—no false security, but to increased holiness and zeal for God.

You will remember, in the first place, that the baptized person makes promises: we need not go into them all now ; every one has often heard of them. But you will all recollect how, in the child's name, the Sponsors promise obedience, faith, love, and holiness. These are the Baptismal Promises,—the baptized person's side of the Covenant. Baptism imposes these conditions: it requires the promise, and God will look for its fulfilment—that you will renounce the Devil, the World, and the Flesh ; that you will believe in God and serve Him ; that you will believe and hold fast to the Christian belief ; that you will earnestly cleave to God, and do His will. All this every one of you, through his Sponsors, promised when you were baptized: this, for the very reason that you are baptized Christian men, you have to keep as you hope for God's mercy and God's grace.

I say, for the very reason that you are baptized Christian men. First, because an unbaptized person cannot in any sort make such a promise. Why? Because, without the grace and help of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, such a promise would be vain, useless, impossible: it would be vain to make it, impossible to keep it. But Baptism opens the channels of His grace, and joins us to

CHRIST, and *makes* us able. What is the state of heathen unbaptized nations in distant lands now? Ask those who have been and seen, and they will tell you how impossible it would be for such to break the heavy yoke which the Devil has laid upon them; how the flesh has dominion over them, and makes them sensual and brutal, so that they cannot rise at all; how belief in God is quite gone, among many of them; and become really only a belief in a Devil; how God's Will and Commandments have vanished from before such people's eyes, or, where not quite vanished, are still quite impossible for them to follow. Such a man could not make the promises which a baptized man can. We can promise, because we are joined to our LORD; we can keep, because that LORD gives us power.

Next, these promises we have to keep, because the sin of breaking them is so awful, so far greater than if we were not CHRIST's members. See how S. Paul here in the Epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the sinfulness of a baptized man's sin. "Ye are the temple of God," he says,—they in whom the HOLY SPIRIT has taken up His dwelling. What then? what was the Apostle's thought when he dwelt on this awful truth, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy," that is, if any man make common and unclean by sinful ways that body which through baptism became the temple of the HOLY GHOST. S. Paul never saw in the solemn view of indwelling grace, which he held, any danger of men growing cold, or careless, or indifferent, because they had become CHRIST's members; but quite the contrary of all this. He saw in it a solemn warning, a powerful motive, a constant reminder of duty. He always speaks so of grace given; he always tells us that

the more a man feels himself to be blessed and favoured with the good gifts of GOD, so much the more will he ever be reaching onward, claiming even more and more of the gifts of the Spirit, ever fearing lest he fall short of grace given, lest he have received in vain, lest he be mis-using great gifts. Any belief in our own blessings or graces which acts in any other way is a false and miserable belief. If a man gets to think, as some miserable men have, that he may break GOD's law, because he is in a state of grace,—that his life matters little whether it be holy or unholy, because he feels assured of his salvation,—such assurance is a miserable snare. Of course evil-minded men might, if they would, so misuse also the doctrine of grace in the Sacrament of Baptism: a man might comfort himself in a sinful course by thinking he was a baptized man, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. All true doctrines may be misused. What I show you this evening is, that the true use of the Church's teaching leads to no such result. The Baptismal Service, and the Catechism alike warn us, that to be a baptized man is to be a man having more solemn duties, more strict ties, more to answer for and far more to lose, than one who is not in covenant with GOD, not a member of CHRIST, nor an heir of glory.

“If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall GOD destroy.” We are all such temples. Do not the Apostle's words cast a solemn light upon many of the dark places of our lives. Where have been our vows, our promises, our faith, our obedience, our love? Have we ever wakened up to the truth that we are members of CHRIST at all: have we not been sleeping over the work of our salvation, not because we believed in our Baptism too much, but because we did not believe in our Baptism at

all? "The Temple of God is holy, which temple are ye." O, is it not an awful word for us to meditate upon? How great have been the manifold defilements which we have allowed to creep in. How many a false word has come forth from Christian lips; and do we not read that whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, shall in no case enter into the city of our God? How many an impure thought has been allowed in Christian hearts; what more defiling to the holy Temple, what more deadly to the soul's life, than such uncleanness? How many an evil act have Christian hands done, and are doing day by day. Have not the thought of God's holy will and commandments gone out of our hearts, and our unholy will and the impure commandments of men taken up their abode there. Is it because we set too high a value on our baptismal blessings, that these things are so? No; but because we set far too low a one. Once make it real to yourself in all your common daily life, that you are children of God the FATHER, members of God the SON, Temples of God the HOLY GHOST, and be sure it will give no security in evil: no, it will work carefulness, zeal, godly fear, vehement desire, revenge. Careful lest any allowed defilement corrupt the chosen habitation of our God; zealous that we act up to the blessedness of our covenant with Him; fearful, lest the promise being given we at all seem to come short of it; desirous vehemently of those blessings of which Baptism has made us heirs; revengeful against ourselves for our backslidings, shortcomings, sins against grace given;—we should bear about with us the memorial of our baptismal privileges in our earnest and active discharge of our baptismal promise.

## LECTURE VII.

## SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER : ITS NECESSITY.

S. MATTHEW IV. 4.

"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD  
THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."

I HAVE been speaking to you in several Lectures about the Sacrament of Baptism. I spoke of its necessity, of its effect, of its responsibilities. I am going on now in the same manner to speak about the Sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER. And I shall follow the same plan as I did before; that is, I shall speak to-day of its necessity only; afterwards of its value and blessedness, of the needful preparation for it, of the responsibilities and duties it brings with it. Our point in the present Lecture, is the necessity to salvation of a due and proper receiving of the Body and Blood of CHRIST in His own way—that is in the Sacrament of this Holy Supper.

And I believe that it is even more needful to point out to you the necessity of this Sacrament, than it was to speak of the necessity of Baptism. The one is a truth far more forgotten, far more disbelieved in than the other. There is no one of us, at least I think and hope not, no one of us who doubts or questions the need of Baptism for the remission of sins. There is no one of us who would not look upon it as an unnatural sin for any parent to neglect to bring their child to the Font; almost all Christian people would think it a fearful neglecting of the duty which each Christian father and mother owes to those which God has given them. Even

though we many of us do not think at all seriously or solemnly upon the meaning or the blessing of Baptism, there are still few who doubt its necessity for salvation. But with the other Sacrament, the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper, it is plainly different. All Christian people are baptized; but it is not all Christian people that are communicants. All Christian people hope to be saved through the Blood of CHRIST, though many have no right to hope; and yet of the large number of Christian people, very much the greater part never come near the Holy Table, when the feast of the Body and Blood of their LORD is spread for them.

All which shows really that in many hearts there is a lurking disbelief in the truth, to which the Bible and the Church bear witness—a disbelief in the truth that a right partaking of the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper is necessary to salvation. Men are often heard to say, that they will not come to the Holy Communion, because they are not fit to come, but that for all that they hope to have their sins forgiven, and be themselves saved at the last; that is, in other words, the LORD JESUS CHRIST has appointed a plain given way open to all of us by which we may be made partakers of the blessings of His salvation, but we will steadfastly refuse to walk in that way and choose out another, hoping it may lead to the same end. That is, you disbelieve the teaching of the Church and the Bible, and set up a teaching of your own, which you like better.

I am going in this Lecture to speak of the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper, as I did before of the Sacrament of Baptism; that is, I shall put before you what the Prayer Book teaches: next I shall show you how that teaching is the teaching of the LORD and His Apostles:

then I leave you after hearing this teaching, to say whether your own life, and your own practice is in keeping with that teaching or not.

To begin with the Catechism. We have all learned there that the LORD's Supper is one of the two Sacraments necessary to salvation. Generally necessary—that is, as I explained to you before, necessary for all men—not for a few advanced Christians—not for very saintly and good people—but for all who have any hope of salvation, all who look for redemption in the Blood of CHRIST. So we teach our children; so you have all been taught in days gone by. The Catechism speaks plainly; it is needful for all. Go next to the Communion Service: you will find at the end of that Service a Rubric or direction, “that every parishioner shall receive the Communion at the least three times a year, of which Easter shall be one.” We all know of course, that this direction is not kept to; like many other Church rules, the badness of men's lives has made it impossible to observe it. It would be no blessing to any man to be forced by others to come to a spiritual feast; it would be a curse to an unfit man so to be brought. But there stands the rule, and it stands there as the testimony of the Church of England, that this Holy Sacrament is needful for the eternal salvation of every one of her children.

Turn now to Holy Scripture, and see what our LORD Himself taught, and what His Apostles observed. The 6th chapter of S. John is the place, where our LORD's teaching is most plain and clear about the matter. Take that chapter, any one of you, and read from the 32nd verse to the 58th, and judge for yourselves of what the *LORD's* testimony is about this Sacrament. He tells the *Jews there* of the true Bread from Heaven; He says,

"that Bread is He which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world," (v. 33.) "I am that Bread of Life," He says: and again, "I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever: and the Bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," (v. 51.) There can be no doubt at all that He was speaking of the meat and drink which His Church should receive in the Holy Communion. He repeats solemnly, as though to warn them that read of the importance of the matter on which He spoke, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you," (v. 53.) Can any words be plainer? You may get over and explain away such teaching; so you may any plain truth of God's Word; but there it stands written for any one who reads honestly to understand. The eating of the Flesh of the Son of Man, and the drinking His Blood are needful for us, if we would have life.

And so the Apostles who heard our LORD's teaching understood. We read of the earliest Christian Church in the Acts of the Apostles; the receiving of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST was a common part of their daily worship. You may read in the 2nd chap. of the Acts, v. 46, "They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house." That is, celebrating the Communion of the LORD's Supper day by day in each other's houses, where they met for prayer, because there were as yet no Churches to meet in. It was the habitual common worship of those days; no man was held a Christian who was not a partaker of the Body and Blood of CHRIST; for the LORD's teaching was fresh in men's ears, and they dared *not do despite to that teaching as men have since.*



But why should this one means of grace be so needful above all others ? Because as Baptism grafts us into the true vine, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, so the feast of the Holy Communion keeps the graft alive. Baptism joins us to the stem, but that is not all ; from the stem must flow upwards strength and life, else the best graft will die. Members we are of CHRIST ; from the Head our strength comes, and the Holy Communion is that which sends through the members that life which belongs to the Head. Or to take another likeness : you remember we called Baptism spiritual regeneration, that is the new birth of the soul ; but the child though born will die without food ; our souls born anew in JESUS CHRIST cannot live, except He give us the needful supply, and the needful strength. His Body and His Blood are that supply and that strength. The LORD Himself has opened the channel ; He has appointed the way. Any one who slights or neglects the appointed channel of grace, and thinks to make out for himself some other channel, is, you will observe, not breaking Church rules or Church appointments only, but is breaking the law of CHRIST, is opposing himself to the gracious purposes of GOD. Compare the Church as it was in the time of the Apostles with the Church as it is now, and judge whether I was not right in saying at first that the LORD'S Supper is a Sacrament whose virtue is much disbelieved in, and its graces much set at nought. What the blessings are we shall have occasion to speak of at length in other Lectures. Meanwhile, let it be enough for us to meditate upon our own wilfulness and our own neglects. "The word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," is given us for our soul's food ; let us take heed lest we neglecting God's gifts, and going after our

own way, find that the bread which perisheth, the inventions of our own hearts, be altogether unequal to sustain our souls in the day of trial ; lest we, rejecting the Word of the LORD, be not ourselves in the end rejected of Him.

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## LECTURE VIII.

## HOLY COMMUNION: ITS PREPARATION.

## 2 SAM. VI. 7.

“THE ANGER OF THE LORD WAS KINDLED AGAINST UZZAH ;  
AND GOD SMOTE HIM THERE FOR HIS ERROR ; AND THERE HE  
DIED BY THE ARK OF GOD.”

I SPOKE in my last lecture about the general necessity of the reception of the Body and Blood of CHRIST in the Holy Communion. I pointed out how any one neglecting or despising so great a means of grace must be imperilling his soul's life for want of that soul's food. But I did not then go at all into the question as to what the right receiving of the Sacrament is. We go on to consider that question now. Of course a great blessing needs a particular condition in the receiver, as well as a particular disposition in the giver ; by which I mean that we must have our hearts in that proper frame and so rightly prepared as that God's blessing finds a dwelling-place in those hearts ; this is as needful to a profitable receiving of any blessing, as that the LORD and giver of all good be prepared and willing to give. We may, by our hardness and sin put a bar in the way of God's grace ; a seed never so good, may fall upon hard ground ; a spark never so bright, may fall upon damp fuel ; and

the seed dies and the spark goes out. Our heart is that soil and that fuel ; we may quench the grace of our LORD, though that grace be very near to us.

It is very needful that we recollect this. The true doctrine of the Sacraments may be very much misused and corrupted, and so brought into discredit with many people, if this rule be forgotten. When we say that the food of the soul, the Body and Blood of our LORD are indeed taken and received by the faithful, we must not forget that they who receive without faith, do indeed receive the Sacrament, but receive it without blessing and without salvation. It is no true teaching, no true belief to think that any one may come, sinful, hardened, impenitent, and receive a blessing at the altar. Men have often so corrupted the truth of GOD, but it has led always to wretched ungodliness and wicked profligacy of life.

Now our point in this lecture shall be, the proper preparation for receiving the LORD's Supper. I said, you will recollect, a right receiving was needful to inherit a blessing ; and of right receiving preparation is a part. We will listen first to the voice of the Church, next to that of Holy Scripture, and then ask ourselves whether we have used those means of preparation, and how they have been blessed to us.

The last question of the Catechism asks, "What is required of them that come to the LORD's Supper ?" that is, what is needful for a proper receiving it ; and the answer gives us in few words a statement of what our preparation should be. "To examine themselves whether they repent them of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, to have a lively faith in GOD's mercy, through CHRIST, with a thankful remembrance of His death, and be in charity with all men." The Com-

munion service itself speaks the same language; it bids us go through each commandment of GOD's law, pray for mercy for sins past, and grace to incline our hearts to obedience for the future. In the exhortation which comes in your Prayer Book after the prayer for the Church Militant; an exhortation which is not usually read through, but which it would be very good for any one of us to read for ourselves before each communion; that exhortation tells us, "The way and means [to make ourselves worthy partakers of the LORD's Supper] is first to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of GOD's commandments: and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to Almighty GOD, with full purpose of amendment of life."

Words of the like kind are addressed to you each time you come to the Holy Table. "Dearly beloved in the LORD," you hear said, "S. Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the LORD," and so on. All a witness against us, if we come without judging and without preparation; not only if we come unworthily, but also if we come hastily, carelessly, neglectfully. Holy Scripture ever speaks the same language. As the Holy Communion was with the first Christians a regular daily service, so we find also that very soon, men of careless irregular habits of mind, began to forget the awful reverence with which all should approach so great a mystery. Among the Christians at Corinth, to whom S. Paul wrote, some such irreverence and thoughtlessness had grown up, and the Apostle rebukes them in words

very full of warning to us. "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the LORD. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the LORD's Body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged." You will find these words in the eleventh chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians; they warn us what the preparation should be for so holy a work as the receiving the Body and Blood of the LORD. All that we read of the way in which GOD dealt with men in old times, tells the same tale. When the ark of GOD, which was the holiest of sacred vessels among the Jews, was taken and kept by the enemies of GOD, all those cities were plagued with great and grievous plagues. (1 Sam. v.) When David was moving that same ark, and as it seemed to totter, Uzzah put out his hand and touched it unlawfully; and the LORD smote him there for his error, and he died. (2 Sam. vi. 7.) So awful is the presence of our GOD; so fearful a thing to approach that presence carelessly. Must it not be so still? the LORD JESUS CHRIST is present at the Holy Table; shall we dare come unprepared, unwatchful? Shall not GOD's anger break out upon us if we do? not indeed as of old, by smiting us with bodily death, but by smiting our hearts with hardness, and making us more thoughtless than we were before.

But if this be so, what is our lesson? Some people will pervert and misuse this as they do all other truths. Some will say, we dare not come to the Holy Communion, lest upon us too a curse fall. Is this the true lesson? *Did we not see before that to cut ourselves off from Com-*

munion is to cut ourselves off from CHRIST; to stint our souls of their natural food, and so in the end to destroy their life. That cannot be our lesson; but this we do learn; that the time before Communion should be a time of self-examining. Surely it would be good for us to make the whole week before our Communion Sunday a week of such examining. Is it not for this very purpose that notice is given, in order that you may not come hastily and without preparation? Each day of the week before Communion, we should add to our usual prayers some special prayer that the LORD will make our body a worthy dwelling-place for Himself. Every day we should examine ourselves specially as to the sins into which we have fallen since our last Communion. Every day we should take some one verse of Holy Scripture which speaks of the blessings of the Sacraments, and having that verse frequently in our hearts during the day, prepare ourselves by meditation to enjoy and profit by these blessings. Few of us do this; most of us come unprepared, and so lose very much of the blessing which GOD's mercy would give us. We all might use some such plan; time we all have for it; it would take very little out of our time; opportunity we all have; it would not make the day's duties be neglected, they would be done all the better, "heartily as unto the LORD." Specially, such a habit would save us from the danger of coming to GOD's altar with forgotten unrepented sin on our conscience, from the danger of calling down His anger on us. "I will wash my hands in innocency, O LORD, and so will I go to Thine altar." I will judge myself, examine myself, condemn myself; this is innocency. For confession and self-judgment bring us to the cross, and there the Blood of the LORD JESUS cleanseth us from all sin.

## LECTURE IX.

### HOLY COMMUNION: ITS COMFORT.

ISA. XXXII. 2.

“A MAN SHALL BE AS AN HIDING PLACE FROM THE WIND, AND A COVERT FROM THE TEMPEST; AS RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE, AS THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND.”

So the prophet Isaiah spoke of that King, whom he saw to come—of that Child virgin-born of whom the HOLY GHOST spoke through His mouth. The LORD JESUS CHRIST, through His Incarnation, became that which Isaiah foresaw, that which but for the Incarnation could not have been; He became our hiding place from the wind, our covert from the tempest—a river of water in the dry places of this world—a shadow of a great rock in the weary toilsome land, through which we are walking heavenwards.

Now if this be true of all the various ways in which it pleases the LORD JESUS to manifest His presence to us, most true must it be of the Sacrament of His own Body and Blood, in which He comes most near; if in prayer, in meditation, in reading the word of God, the presence of the LORD be our comfort and our support, our stay and our strength, our peace and our joy, specially will this be so when we kneel at His altar and are made partakers of His nearer presence. The Sacrament of the LORD's Table is especially a Sacrament of comfort; it is in this point of view that we are going to speak of it here.

In doing so, we follow the order which the Prayer Book in its Communion Office points out. You remember

we spoke in the last lecture of the due preparation for receiving the Sacrament—we saw that preparation to be self-examination and confession ; until we have so prepared ourselves, we are not fit either to hear of or to enjoy the blessed comfort which the Sacrament gives. And therefore it is not till after the confession that the Priest who celebrates the Holy Communion speaks these comfortable words of encouragement, which tell of pardon and forgiveness and peace in the Blood of CHRIST. The exhortations that come before are rather in the nature of warning ; they tell of the needful preparation, self-judgment, self-condemnation. Then comes the general confession, in which we lay before Almighty GOD the tale of our misdoings, our backslidings, our neglects ; then the absolution, in which the Priest pronounces pardon upon those who have heartily repented and humbly confessed. That confession made and that pardon sealed, there come for the first time words of comfort and joy : “ Hear what comfortable words our SAVIOUR CHRIST saith to all that truly turn to Him.” These are the words which shall be the subject of our thought now ; the abundant overflowing comfort going forth from the broken body and the blood poured out for all those who come thither, weary, brokenhearted, and full of heaviness.

Let us observe, first, how all the comfortable words of the Prayer Book are words specially spoken to penitents, that is, to sinners who know their sins. Our LORD Himself speaks first : “ Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” S. Paul next : “ CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners.” S. John last : “ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the FATHER.” All alike telling of sin and uncleanness in us, but withal of pardon and cleansing. This is the



first and chief comfort. Two very important lessons follow out of this.

First; such words are a solemn testimony against the common excuse for absence from the LORD's Table. "I do not come because I am not ready; I have a great many sins to answer for, and I do not feel myself fit to come." Miserable self-deceiving. Did any true penitent ever fly from his SAVIOUR's presence? did any sick man ever shun the physic because his sickness was so bad? did any hungry man ever fly from food, or the thirsty man from drink, because his hunger was so great and his thirst so parching? What folly should we hold this sort of talk in the common things of this life! Is it less folly in our soul's precious things? No; deceive ourselves as we will; the reason why we are absent from the LORD's Table is exactly the contrary of all this. We feel *no* burden of sin, therefore we do not need its removal; we feel no sickness, therefore we come not to be healed; we have no hunger or thirst after the things of GOD which needs satisfying. Let every one who keeps back from Christian blessings on such excuses as these, read in these words of his Prayer Book a witness to the blessedness of those who, feeling their burden, bring it to their LORD and in Him find rest.

And next let us see how all true comfort must follow after confession; these comfortable words are not spoken till we have called up our sins, confessed them, mourned over them, and received absolution. It is a very false sort of religion which is always craving after comfort under sin, comfort while sin is unconfessed, unpardoned, unabsolved. This is not the office of the Gospel; we cannot too often repeat it. "There is no peace, saith my GOD, to the wicked," is as true now in CHRIST's Church

as it ever was in the Church of old. God forbid that there should be one word anywhere in our services which seemed even to uphold so miserable a mistake, which taught men to nurse up and cherish their sins and comfort themselves meanwhile with the fond comfort that their guilt was put away. The words of comfort are for those "who truly turn to CHRIST;" to turn truly is to come with self-abhorrence, with confession and mourning, not to cloke and hide our misdoings and still expect peace.

But for them that truly turn, the blessed Sacrament of the LORD's Supper is full of abundant comfort; comfort first in the assurance of sin pardoned and guilt washed away. S. Mary Magdalene is the type of all true penitents; casting herself at the feet of her LORD, all impure and unclean, cleaving to Him as her hope and stay, weeping over her own past life, full of love for Him who had first loved her much. Those penitential tears were the needful condition of her forgiveness—and so is it with the repentant servant of JESUS CHRIST, kneeling before that altar where the LORD is still present to heal. Have we been by that LORD as much as she? We are indeed forgiven, if we would but claim forgiveness, as fully; but, oh! how far short of her love; surely we have not made real to ourselves what it is that we receive in the hour of communion; surely we have never taken to ourselves the fulness of forgiveness, the perfection of peace, the completeness of our union; else would the out-pouring of our hearts be even like unto hers, and our tears would flow in abundance over the exceeding love wherewith He hath loved us.

And next there is comfort in the Holy Communion in the assurance of strength and help to come; we are joined in the Sacrament to that perfected nature of our

LORD wherewith He is ascended into the heaven, and is set down at the right hand of the FATHER's glory. From that nature virtue goes out to His children; and as we are again united by faithful participation of the holy mysteries with Him, again and again new life flows into our souls. We are strengthened against temptation through union with Him, Who, in human flesh, withstood the evil one and triumphed; strengthened for obedience through Him whose obedience to the FATHER was perfect and entire; strengthened for labour in GOD's cause through Him Whose whole life on earth was a labour of love, Whose life in heaven is continued intercession for those whom He loves still. But what a small portion of the real strength of the LORD's humanity have we drunk in at our many attendances at the Holy Communion; is not this too of our own want of faith, that we have not opened our mouth wide, when He was ready to fill it?

We will stop here. This brings us to the end of one part of the Communion Office; the next division rises yet higher, and bids us raise our hearts and voices upwards to heaven. We will speak of the Seraphic song of praise hereafter. Let us rest at present in the thought of the blessed comfort of the heavenly feast, of the smallness of our enjoyment compared to the richness of the blessing. May the LORD JESUS be to us henceforth, if He has not been hitherto, "a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

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## LECTURE X.

HOLY COMMUNION: THE BOND OF EARTH AND  
HEAVEN.

## REVELATION v. 12.

**"WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER,  
AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND  
GLORY, AND BLESSING."**

I SAID that the part of the Communion Office to which we have come, bids us rise higher than any which has gone before ; bids us rise above all thought of earth, and lift up our hearts to the eternal Throne. The comfortable words of peace and pardon which have gone before, have assured us of our reconciliation with Him who sits on that throne ; and then, so reconciled unto the FATHER, through the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the call of GOD'S Minister bids us raise our hearts heavenward, and we answer to the call " Lift up your hearts," " We lift them up unto the LORD." " Let us give thanks to our LORD GOD." " It is meet and right so to do." And then all together (for all the congregation should join together in this part of the Service,) we unite our voices, with the heavenly voices of the angels who minister in the Eternal Presence, and say, " Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD of Hosts ; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory ! Glory be to Thee, O LORD most High !"

Did you ever think of what these words, so full of solemn beauty, mean ? Did you ever asky ourselves how we could join in the hymn of praise sung by angels round GOD'S throne, or how they can join in our worship and

sing praises with us? Surely, if words mean anything, these words tell us how, when we gather round the altar, to feed upon the heavenly food there offered us, that we are not alone; that it is not the two or three who in this or that church receive the Sacrament, but that all heaven and earth are joining in the feast,—all heaven and earth uniting in one hymn of thanksgiving and of praise.

And yet how can this be? Let us consider. Of course, if the Holy Communion were only a memorial of something past—something to remind us of our SAVIOUR's sufferings and death,—if this were all, however useful an instrument for this purpose, it would be unmeaning to use such words as this about it: because it would only be a memorial here on earth to the few present at it of something, the recollection of which was to quicken their faith and warm their love. Now, the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper is indeed this, but it is also a great deal more; it is a living witness of a present LORD. Nay, it is yet more: it is the appointed means by which the Death of that LORD is made available to the salvation of each one who eats and drinks in faith, the application of the merits of the Cross. It is this which gives so high a dignity and so deep a meaning to all that pertains to the Holy Sacrament; it is this that can alone explain or justify words which tell of the whole heavenly host worshipping with us in each Communion.

For let us remark, that the words we use here are no empty words,—no figure of speech,—but that in these words we profess to believe that we are joining in worship with the whole of the blessed host of angels; that they, with us, are adoring the wisdom, and love, and glory, and power of the living SAVIOUR whose death we commemorate. Now, this hymn is the very oldest part

of our Communion Service ; one of the very oldest parts of our Prayer Book. We have good reason to believe that when the Apostles broke bread from house to house, when they celebrated the Holy Communion of the LORD's Body and Blood, they used these very words—they chanted this very hymn. We are not sure of this : but the very oldest liturgies and prayer-books which we have (and they come from several parts of the world,) have this hymn in them. None of them, certainly, can we be quite sure reach back as far as the Apostles' own time, but they come very near it ; and there is no old liturgy any where that has not this hymn of ours in it. And it is in itself very likely that such words would come in any service which the Apostles drew up, because, you will observe, in the next place, that they are very nearly the words of the Bible itself. The Prophet Isaiah, (ch. vi. 3,) tells us of a vision which he had, in which he saw heaven opened, and the LORD GOD on His everlasting throne, and the holy angels gathered round Him. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of Hosts ; the whole earth is full of His glory." Our seraphic hymn is the very same ; we, in our highest office of praise and thanksgiving, have taken to ourselves the same words of adoration which angels and archangels use around the throne above.

So far, I have shown you whence the words come, and why we use them ; the question still remains behind,—What reason have we to call our feast, in the Holy Communion, a feast for angels, as well as for men ; a feast at which they are present, and praise and worship the same LORD as ourselves ?

In the first place, the holy angels, though they need themselves no cleansing from sin, having themselves

never sinned, do yet take a solemn delight—an awful joy—in dwelling upon ~~that~~ <sup>the</sup> mystery by which man has been redeemed. They needed not cleansing, but they rejoiced in the cleansing of those who do need it. S. Peter, speaking in his first Epistle of the sufferings of CHRIST, and the glory that should follow, adds, “Which things the angels desire to look into.” You remember how often they ministered to the LORD of Life during His sojourn on earth. They announced His Birth to the shepherds; they ministered to Him in His temptation; they were with Him in Gethsemane; they were at His tomb at the Resurrection; they were about Him in His Ascension. They desired to look into the mystery of GOD made Flesh. And so, each time that the merits of GOD made Flesh are, in GOD’s appointed way, brought home to the soul of each faithful believer,—each time the Sacrament of the LORD’s Supper is duly celebrated and faithfully received on earth, it is not on earth only that joy is felt. The Communion is a bond which ties heaven and earth together: and as the LORD of Heaven becomes one with each faithful receiver of His Flesh and of His Blood, the song of praise which our imperfect voices raise, is echoed in purer strains by heavenly voices; and were our ears opened, as one day they will be, we should hear a voice from heaven, as “the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and the voice of harpers, harping with their harps.” And next, Holy Scripture has revealed to us how, in every true congregation of Christian worshippers there are angels present, helping at our worship. They are ministering spirits, and are sent to minister to us, no doubt, at our holiest times, and our holiest acts. Unseen, they are yet about us in all our worship: most of all, when

we adore the love of the Lamb, whom they serve, even as we.

And once more, is it not written, "There is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth?" If, then, there be no more fit place for penitent sinners to come, than to that place where they receive pledges of forgiveness, and strength to mend; if, as we saw in our last Lecture, the Holy Communion is full of very blessed comfort for all who turn their eyes heavenwards, filled with tears for past sin, there must be joy among those who rejoice with pure and heavenly joy over all repented transgression. The Good Shepherd hath been on His search, and hath brought back the stray one; and they rejoice, for He hath found the sheep that was lost. There is nothing of selfish joy in heavenly spirits; the Lamb was slain for our transgression, but over that death do they glory. Have we ever thought of the presence of heavenly messengers around us at the Lord's Table? Surely the knowledge of their presence should fill us with deep and awful thoughts of the unworthiness of our worship—of the poverty of our praise! He only can open our lips; He only can give us angels' tongues, who, having loved us exceedingly Himself, knows how to kindle love in return. He only can make us able to sing His praises here on earth, or join in singing that praise more truly around His own throne in heaven.

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## LECTURE XI.

## HOLY COMMUNION : RESPONSIBILITIES OF ITS RECEPTION.

2 COR. VI. 15.

“WHAT CONCORD HATH CHRIST WITH BELIAL?”

THE Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper ministers to us, when rightly received, the food of our souls, the Body and Blood of our LORD. We have seen this in lectures which have gone before. I have spoken to you at some length upon the nature of this Sacrament; on its necessity, its preparation, its comfort, and its blessings. It binds together heaven and earth; it is the feast in which we are made one with our LORD; one with all the faithful, all the world through; one with those who before us have been gathered to their rest. “All are partakers of that one bread.” It is our strength for all spiritual life, our seal of forgiveness, our means of union, our earnest of immortality. But then the possession and enjoyment of so great a blessing must needs bring with it great responsibilities. When we were speaking of holy Baptism, we saw that to be a baptized person, and to forget all our baptismal duties, was a worse downfall than never to have been baptized at all; because as we said then, GOD'S gifts must needs work, and if we will not let these be blessings, they must needs turn into curses. The same is true of the other Sacrament. The Body and Blood of the LORD is surely an unspeakable blessing to all who faithfully use the grace given;

but just in proportion to its blessedness, so also may it be turned into an increase of condemnation and sin.

It is then a question for us of the very deepest importance to ask ourselves, How am I to *use* the grace and the strength which the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper gives? We spoke of the needful preparation *before* receiving: we speak now of the responsibilities afterwards. Let us remark first that all graces of whatever kind are given us to be *used*; they do not act as some spring or piece of clockwork might act upon a dead machine, moving this part one way and that part another. The machine has no will; it is moved or kept still, and knows nothing about it; but the living man *has* a will, and can resist or can yield. God's grace comes on such a one, and persuades, and inclines, and strengthens, but it does not force—does not make a man go right, if he is determined to go wrong. We must use the gift to make it profitable to us, else it will lie a dead useless thing. The blessings of the LORD's Supper are of this kind, given not to lie idle, but to be used and thankfully improved.

And this is true for all of us. It is not enough to be able to say,—I did prepare myself; I did examine my heart; I did come with earnestness, and thought, and reverence, and love. There is further for us the question,—How have I used the blessing; how have I striven to stir up the grace?

I think we may learn much as to the responsibilities which the receiving of the LORD's Supper brings with it, by going over again something of what we have said before. We call the elements after consecration, after our LORD's own teaching, the Body and Blood of CHRIST. Now that Body and Blood, that human Nature of our LORD's was pure, sinless, undefiled. His indwelling

should work the same effect on our sinful flesh. How great then must the guilt be of one who with his soul so strengthened and so hallowed by CHRIST'S Presence, allows himself to be again and again entangled in those corruptions, from which the LORD'S Presence would deliver him! Can the grace of the Holy Sacrament abide in the heart, where the love of sin is allowed entrance again? Can CHRIST have concord with Belial? Will the LORD'S Presence remain and occupy the same habitation as the evil one? Do you remember a place in our LORD'S teaching, where He tells of one out of whom the devil departs for a time, and then comes back and finds the man's heart open to receive him? "Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." It is just the case of one who with some good thought and earnest resolution, comes to the LORD'S Table; and then thinking it enough to have received the pledges of his LORD'S indwelling, goes away and takes no more thought. Such a man's heart is empty, swept and garnished; no good habits, no Christian graces, no virtues have taken up their abode, and the evil ones come back; more powerful, more settled, more difficult to subdue than ever. "Seven other spirits more wicked than the first, enter in and dwell there. The last state is worse than the first." Do you think I say this to frighten you away from the LORD'S Table, for fear you should afterwards sin against grace given? Not at all;—but to show you that having been there, does bring with it the solemn duty of watching and checking, and examining yourself afterwards, that you may not suffer GOD'S precious gift to lie idle and unused; that you may not corrupt His

temple by bringing sin in. Surely this ought to show us the great value of frequent Communion, the danger of contenting ourselves with a rare, occasional reception of the Sacrament, with long intervals of time between. Were our Communions, as they should be with all, at short periods, every month for example, each Communion would take up the one that went before in guarding as well as in strengthening us: the recollection of our last Communion and its resolutions would be fresh in our mind up to the time when we next approached the LORD's Presence, and renewed those resolutions and gained new strength to carry them onwards. And so there would be really a continued growth in grace. As things are with many of us, the time between our Communions is so long, that there is abundant time for us to fall back in our heavenward course between one time of refreshing and another. And so it is that we see many, who are not always absent from the means of grace, still make no advance: they remain just where they were, neither much better nor much worse. Reckon up the number of times that they have knelt at the Altar during the year past, and you will know the reason. They cannot go on from strength to strength, because long fasting from spiritual food is constantly turning the strength into weakness.

We said again that the Holy Communion is the bond which binds earth to heaven; we are made partakers in it of that glorified nature wherewith the LORD is ascended into the heavens. If it be so, how should they walk who are so joined to heaven? What condemnation must it be for a man to eat angels' food here in Church, and then to go and mind earthly things, to live for them, to cleave to them! "Our conversation," S. Paul testifies,

"is in heaven:" in the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper we are already citizens of heaven; already fellow-citizens of the Saints, and of the household of GOD. What is it then for a man so raised to go and live wholly for this earth? Is it not to lose his citizenship, is it not to forfeit his inheritance? Yet there is many a one who is seen at the LORD's Table now and then, and meanwhile is minding earthly things almost wholly: some occasional communicants, whose prayers are very few, whose lives are very careless, whose love of GOD is very faint and poor, leading to no self-denial, or carelessness, or hatred of sin. Surely this is not the life of one, who has been fed on heavenly meat; not the life of one who has at all valued the blessing or believed in the grace. Our thoughts of GOD's mercies, and GOD's love, are poor and low and earthly thoughts. Such a man has never *risen* to the true value of the Sacrament at all.

You will think, it may be, that what you have read in these Lectures, is not altogether what you have been accustomed to believe about the holy things of GOD; that you have heard stricter rules and more difficult laid down for you in the use of these blessings than *you* ever thought necessary or felt disposed to use. Perhaps it is so, for we have grown very lax and very careless about the holiest things. Surely it is good for us to be put in mind of how very unworthy our thoughts about GOD have been, how very irreverent and thankless our use of His mercies. Good for us too, to be reminded that to be living without strict rules is to be living in continual danger: strict rules alone can keep us in a path which is itself strait, narrow, easily missed. Good to be reminded of the awfulness of our spiritual being, of the *depth of Christian mysteries*, of the danger of those who

misuse them. We are fearfully and wonderfully made: fearful and wonderful is our souls' birth, and growth, and nourishment. If the words which you have read on these subjects here have made you think more deeply on them, may He bless the seed sown yet further, and change our carelessness into earnestness, and reverence, and love.

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## LECTURE XII.

### THE CHURCH, A FAMILY.

ROMANS XII. 15.

"REJOICE WITH THEM THAT DO REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP."

WE have been speaking in these lectures hitherto of the services for the ministration of the two Sacraments, Baptism and the LORD'S Supper. We took those first because they are the highest of the Church's ministrations, the fountains and springs of spiritual life. But, as every Churchman knows, these are not the only services in the Prayer Book—there are several others, to be called into use for the various needs and occasions of life. There is a Marriage Service, a Burial Service, a Confirmation Service, a service for the Visitation of the Sick. Of all these we shall say something in their turn; but before we go to any one, let us take a little thought as to the meaning of there being such services at all.

You have often heard it said that Christian men are all one, all brethren in JESUS CHRIST; but it is a truth we very quickly lose sight of. It is to testify to this truth *that the Prayer Book contains all these occasional ser-*

vices. The whole Gospel of CHRIST testifies against anything like selfishness or exclusiveness in the service of GOD. The LORD came into the world to gather together into one head all that should believe in Him. The words which are used in Scripture to express our relation to CHRIST all witness the same thing. He is called our Head, the Church is called His *Body*, Christians called His *members* or limbs; all, that is to say, are joined together, not separate parts, each going their own way and each having their own interest, but each united in one mystical body, all joined one to another, all having common interests and a common faith.

We may find other likenesses in our LORD's teaching which lead us to the same thought. All Christian people that are brought to Him are called His sheep and He their shepherd; each single one having indeed its own several wants and needs, but each one finding the supply of those wants and needs in common and together, under one shepherd the LORD JESUS CHRIST, in one fold, the Church. Directly such union is forgotten, danger begins; once leave the fold and who knows where the wolf may find you? In like manner the LORD calls Himself the vine, and His children the branches, not each growing from its own root and finding its own nourishment as it may, but all joined into one stem, all drawing moisture and strength and life from one common root; many branches with very different strength, some hardy, weather-tried, strong, some tender, some sickly, still all, if they are alive at all, joined to one root, and so all knit up one to another. In other words, the Christian man does not stand alone, but is member of one large family; we are all children of one Father, all saved in one common *Brother, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.*

The same truth we learn by the two Sacraments.—Baptism receives us, the LORD's Supper strengthens and maintains us in the Church. All the world over, where-soever the name of CHRIST is preached and the Church of CHRIST set up, these new members are grafted into the Church by one and the same means, the same washing of water, the same form of words; not this or that means of entrance according as this or that country, this or that Church thinks good. It might be so were Christians so many separate beings, each walking according to his own fashion through the world; but the Church is, or ought to be, one large family, and so there is one entrance, one door, one Sacrament of regeneration, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

In like manner with the other Sacrament, the Sacrament of our Redemption, "We are all partakers of that one bread." It is a token or sign of the oneness of CHRIST's children. A loaf of bread is one, though it be many; one loaf made up of many crumbs. The bread which we break at the altar is an image of Christian people, each with their own life, yet all drawing that life from one head, all crumbs of one bread. And therefore, as all Christian men, because they are one family, have all the same entrance into the Church, all coming into the FATHER's house through one and the same door, even so have they one table, one board, one feast, one spiritual food. The LORD's Supper, the food of our souls is all the world through, the one nourishment of true faithful Christian spirits, one food, not many, though it lie on many different tables; for wherever it be, it is the same, the one Body and the one Blood, broken and shed once for all for the sins of the whole world.

*And the same lesson which the true doctrine of the*



Sacraments teaches us, is repeated by our Church's and the services of our Prayer Book. Baptism is ministered publicly in the middle of service, to remind us of our union with one another, to remind all that a new baptized child is by that baptism become a member of same family with ourselves. The Holy Communion celebrated publicly (except in sickness), to testify to us, who partake, are all one in the LORD—to remind those who absent themselves that they are cutting themselves off from the one great family, and from Him Who is their FATHER. Yet so careful is the Church lest any, through unavoidable cause be deprived of their spiritual food, that she allows of ministration of the Holy Communion in private houses in case of sickness, and assures those who so partake that they are as really members of the one family, as if they were able to join in the congregation's worship. The very assembling ourselves together for worship at all is a witness of the same kind; Common Prayer, what does it mean? Prayer offered up by all on behalf of all, by the whole family, to the one FATHER of Spirits.

And because we are such a family and have such a FATHER, therefore does the Church care for all of us in all the several relations and conditions of life in which we may be placed. The Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST has made all things holy; nothing need any more be common or unclean. All the acts of our every-day life the Church would teach us to be acts done to GOD and hallowed by prayer. All the acts of our neighbour's life, she would teach us also, to be acts in which we have an interest and a share. A member of any Christian congregation is one of many brethren; these many brethren should rejoice in his joy, should sorrow in his sorrow.

The union of two members of CHRIST is to be a union celebrated in the face of His Church, and blessed by His priest; the birth of a child is an occasion of common joy and thanksgiving with her who has been preserved; the confirmation of baptismal vows and baptismal blessings an occasion when all should meet and aid by their prayers the renewed resolution of their own children and their neighbours'; the grave of a departed brother, a place hallowed of all, and where all may drop a tear of fellow-feeling for those left behind, and raise a note of praise for that sure and certain hope which the LORD has given us in His resurrection.

Such is the notion of a Christian parish which the services of the Prayer Book lay before us. It tells of a common life, common blessings, common hopes, joys, and sorrows; it tells of all united together in worship and service, in life and in death. If the picture which a Christian parish actually present to us now, be something very different; if selfishness have come in even to our religious services and made us forget our neighbour's welfare and our neighbour's salvation—if our common daily life has become a common unclean thing, no longer sanctified by the Word of God and prayer—it is because we have forgotten the guidance of our Prayer Book, though it be daily in our hands and its words always sounding in our ears. We must go back there to learn what we have so much forgotten; and pray Him who has knit us together to make us feel and love as brethren, to lead us to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

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## LECTURE XIII.

### EDUCATION.

S. LUKE II. 46.

**"THEY FOUND HIM IN THE TEMPLE, SITTING IN THE MIDST OF THE DOCTORS, BOTH HEARING THEM AND ASKING THEM QUESTIONS."**

You remember that when we were speaking of the effect of Baptism upon the child's heart, we said that a seed was then sown, which after years must bring out and unfold. We said that the seed might die for want of nurture and care; the grace of Baptism be made of none effect, be made a curse and no blessing, if the child grew up without any teaching, or training, or guidance, or restraint. You remember that the Church service reminded us of this in that solemn address to the god-fathers and godmothers with which the service concludes, where they are told what is their part and duties towards those whom they have brought to the font. But Church teaching does not stop here. Turn to your Prayer Book and you will see that directly after the Baptismal services comes the Church Catechism, the form of sound words, which it is directed should be taught to all children of the Church before they come to the Bishop to renew their baptismal vows, and receive an enlargement of their baptismal blessings.

Now you may remark first about the Catechism that it stands after the service for Baptism, and before the service for Confirmation, between the two. This is not an accident, but has been so placed intentionally and with

a meaning. Baptism is the first step ; Christian teaching the second : Confirmation the third ; the Catechism must be learned between the two, as the needful step from the one to the other. The grace of Baptism is given to the unconscious infant, but that grace must be stirred up when the child becomes conscious, that is, when it has mind and thought enough to understand, to believe, to obey. Faith and repentance must come in then to make the grace of Baptism effectual to the salvation of the grown person's soul. And faith and repentance there cannot be without Christian teaching of some sort. Some education in the right way must follow Baptism and prepare the way for our afterwards receiving that gift in Confirmation which is to strengthen and guard us in after life.

The Catechism is, as you all know, a number of questions and answers upon the promises and the vows and the blessings of Baptism ; its object is to teach the baptized servant of CHRIST what he has promised, and how those promises are to be kept. Of course, the mere knowledge by rote of the answers in the Catechism is not all that the Church means, when it sets those answers to be learned by all baptized children. The words themselves so learned are useful and valuable, because to know the words is the first step to understanding them. But it is the understanding and the application which is the important and needful matter ; forms are very useful, and what we cannot at all do without, but only useful when they enclose a substance ; a man cannot live without a framework of bones inside him, but a mere skeleton is not a living man. The answers in the Catechism are like the bones of a skeleton, all fitting together, all beautifully arranged, all joining into one whole, but only a frame-

work ; other teaching must come in and overlay the bones with muscles and flesh, and all the needful parts of the living body.

When then the Church says all her children must learn the Catechism between the time of Baptism and the time of Confirmation ; she means that Christian teaching is essential, that without Christian teaching no one can fulfil his baptismal vows, no one can reap his baptismal blessings. Of course teaching may come in many ways ; sometimes from the parent ; the mother teaching her child his first words of prayer ; the father marking out and checking and correcting the first springs of evil and sin in the child's life—the elder child taught to deny herself that she may be useful and helpful to the younger. Sometimes from the school, where lessons of order, regularity, obedience, submission, are brought home to the child's eye as well as to his ear, taught by practice as well as by precept. Sometimes by books, where the words of the wise are written, and every here and there some such word takes root and grows up ; sometimes in church in a sermon or a lecture. In different ways teaching comes ; to most of us in all these ways put together, each working its own work under God's blessing ; and it must come in each of these several ways for the real unfolding of a Christian character, for the building up of the young and making them fit to be heirs of heaven.

I am not going, of course, to speak of the several parts of the Catechism here, but only notice it because it occupies a place in our Prayer Book, and because its place there is full of lessons for us, even without going particularly into its contents ; lessons I mean about our duty as Christian parents and sponsors, as Christian masters and heads of families. No duties that I know of

are so forgotten, no duties if rightly discharged would bring so large a blessing on ourselves and our people.

First, then, the Catechism is a standing witness against all whose children are growing up or have grown up without Christian teaching or Christian discipline. The first duty in the matter must lie with the parents, and no one else can take the burden off their shoulders. We can never too often repeat, that to train up a child in the path of Christian obedience is quite as much a father's duty as it was to bring him to the font at first. Such training will of course bring with it trouble, thought, and care; it will need that they be watched, checked, looked after, corrected, warned. It will need that they be sent to school to learn much, that you have no time nor ability to teach yourselves. It will need that in many things you give yourselves much care, often much uneasiness and trouble. But all these were duties that you undertook when you became married men and fathers of families; very likely you thought little about such duties then; but whether you thought about them or not, you cannot shake them off now; your children are baptized Christians, heirs of life and of eternal glory. Should they fall from their hope and lose their crown because you have trained them ill, your guilt is fearfully great; and yet there are very few indeed who ever care to think about these duties at all; very few who look upon their children as immortal spirits with immortal destinies. Let us take one or two instances very common amongst us. There are some parents who think they have done all they need and all they can when they have sent their children to school and keep them there. Now, surely this is only one, and that a very small part of their duty; first, a child is out of school three times as long as he is in; hours of play, hours at home, hours in the village street have a great

deal more to do with making up a child's character than all school teaching can. Just think how one example, in a bad home, must needs undo twenty good lessons in the best school. To give your children a good school to come to is the part of others; to lead them so to live as that school lessons may be realities and not mere words, is your part, and this is a work which none can do except those with whom the children live, and ought to look up to for example and pattern.

There are some too who are seldom to be found in their own homes to set any examples or to train in any way at all. I do not speak of loose careless people at all; but there are people of religious sensibilities and religious earnestness who sadly forget what home duties and home religion means. For a man to leave his own home where there are plain duties, because he finds more pleasant society, perhaps more godly society as he thinks, elsewhere, who lets his children run wild and spend Sunday how they may and how they will; such a man is altogether mistaking his Christian calling. S. Paul tells us, "that the man that provideth not for his own house hath denied the faith, and is become worse than an Infidel;" words quite as true of the spiritual wants as of the bodily needs of our families. Few more sad sights, and few more common, than the sons of a godly man growing up ungodly, riotous, dissolute. It reminds us of Eli the old priest, and Hophni and Phinehas his two evil sons. Here is the Church's witness against the unchristian neglect of Christian fathers. Our baptized children have, at our hands, a right to the education of Christian children; and education is a large word, it means training, watching, warning, example. Our schools may give teaching; *but training must needs come from the family and the home.*

## LECTURE XIV.

## EDUCATION.

1 SAMUEL I. 24.

"SHE BROUGHT HIM INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD IN SHILOH, AND THE CHILD WAS YOUNG."

THE Catechism, we said in our last Lecture, is a witness for Christian education, a witness against the neglect of it on the part of those who are bound to give it to their children. And we saw also how education means in its true sense a great deal—means more than sending children to school, teaching them to read and write, and the like—that education means properly the training up; moulding and fashioning the mind, and the tempers, and the habits of the young: teaching habits of self-denial, self-control, order, and obedience. We saw further that of education a much larger part lay in the hands of the parents than of any one else; we finished our last Lecture by saying that schools may give teaching, but training must needs come from the family and the home.

But we did not point out fully what these words mean. I am going to speak more particularly of what Christian parents might do; what they are bound to do; what very many of them neglect to do, in the way of training up their children.

I. One of the first mistakes that we make about the training of our children, is to suppose that because a child is very young, therefore it does not matter what he sees, or what he hears, or how he is controlled. *It will be time enough to think about teaching a year or two*



hence. Yes, it would be time enough, did teaching mean reading and writing, but not time enough, if teaching means the making of character. Character begins to be made so soon as a child knows anything : almost as soon as it can see, it can drink in evil by the eye ; almost as soon as it can hear, it drinks in evil by the ear. There is nothing so entirely false, as to think that very young children need no training : they need it most of all, and it will tell upon them best of all. It is quite true that a young child will need less severity, fewer hard words, may be much more easily bent than a grown boy will ; but why is it that severity, and hardness, and stern methods are needed afterwards, except because gentle methods have been forgotten at first. A boy grows up disobedient because as a little child he was allowed his own way ; he grows up self-indulgent, because he was allowed to please himself and never denied in anything : he grows up disrespectful to his superiors, because he was allowed in disrespectful words to his father or his mother first : he grows up irreverent and ungodly at church, because he was allowed when a little child to say his prayers carelessly, lounging, or perhaps in bed. Get rid wholly of that false notion that training may be put off for older years : it must begin from the cradle. From the cradle the enemy of souls will be busy to destroy the nurslings of CHRIST ; from the cradle every Christian parent ought to be busy to guard against the evil workings of that enemy. Our own common sense should teach us this. Who ever think of leaving a horse till he is ten years old and then try and break him in ? Who would let a tree grow twenty years crooked and then try and bend it straight ? It is this way which we use with the *immortal spirits* of our children, though we should never

think of so dealing with the commonest things of this life.

II. Next, we do most sadly forget how much example must do: how little precept can do against it. The child comes to school and hears of the sin of lying, the duty of self-control, the awful guilt of sins of the tongue. The same child goes home, and hears falsehood told unchecked, is sent perhaps herself on a message with a known lie in her mouth; sees violence of temper and outbursts of passion in her own parents: hears guilty words and profane language from her father's lips. Which do you think will have most power, the school lesson or the home example? Preach, teach, or reason as you may, the real powerful teacher is the example which the child sees. Family quarrels, home bitterness, fireside ungodliness, do far more for the devil than years of church or school teaching can do for God.

III. Yet again, our correction and guidance of our children ought to be regulated by reason and conscience; it is regulated by temper, and passion, and our own convenience. I will show you what I mean. A child is allowed to go on in sin, to commit a fault again and again, and no notice is taken, because the fault has not caused you any trouble. The same child commits exactly the same fault and it causes you much trouble, you are angry and most likely violent in your anger. You forbid a child to throw stones, and he goes on throwing stones unchecked till one of the stones breaks your window; your temper is roused, and you are severe and cruel in your punishment. A child may tell twenty lies to other people and you know of them, and take no notice: he tells a lie and deceives you, and you are passionate and *vehement*. That is not punishment, but revenge, in-

flicted not in the least for the child's sake, but wholly for your own. The first lie, the first disobedience was exactly the same sin as the last : only the one was inconvenient to you, the other sinful against God ; and the sin against God you overlooked, the inconvenience to yourself you resented. Can there be any blessing on such training ? No, it is exactly this which makes our older children headstrong, self-willed, deceitful and untrue.

At the root of the whole matter lies the fact that we have forgotten our duty as Christian parents : we have forgotten our children's position as baptized members of CHRIST. The Catechism beginning with a statement of our Baptismal blessings and our Baptismal duties, is a warning to all parents as well as an instruction to all children. We look upon our children first as toys and playthings, then as helps and assistances in the world : well for us if they do not turn out thorns and afflictions : the way in which we deal with them is the sure way to make them so. Once learn to look upon the babe in the cradle, the young child, the growing boy, as all alike temples in which the HOLY SPIRIT of JESUS CHRIST dwells, and our duty to them becomes a holy religious service, instead of a worldly business or amusement. Their training will be felt to be a solemn earnest work : a burden indeed, but a burden which GOD has laid upon us, which we cannot without sin against Him cast down ; of course this implies that we be GOD-seeking Christian men ourselves ; yes, certainly, no one can do Christian duty towards another who is not himself godly. No one can really train up a child rightly, except in the fear and admonition of the LORD. It is only to GOD-seeking men *that I am speaking at all*. See what the pattern is which

Scripture sets before us of a godly childhood: "They brought him into the house of the LORD, and the child was young." Our children can only be trained for God by our bearing in mind from the cradle upwards that they have immortal regenerate souls, that they are members of CHRIST and heirs of glory. They are not our own, they are the adopted sons of a heavenly FATHER: but we by our neglect may draw them away from Him, or by our care may train them up to be polished pillars in the temple of our God. Were this principle imprinted in our hearts, our training of our children would be earnest and real: without it all education and all teaching is profitless and vain. It is because they are baptized, because they are of the household of faith, that they claim at our hands far more care than they mostly get: it is because they are engrafted members of CHRIST that they have a right to that training, which will make them meet for their eternal inheritance.

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## LECTURE XV.

## CONFIRMATION.

## ECCLESIASTES XII. 1.

"REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT, NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH WHEN THOU SHALT SAY, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM."

OUR progress through the Occasional Services of the Prayer Book, brings us to the Confirmation Service. For we have spoken of the Sacramental grace of Baptism, and then of the duty of Christian education:

and all education must be, or ought to be, a preparation for understanding well and keeping earnestly the promises of our Baptism. These promises we renew, and the grace of Baptism also is renewed in Confirmation : therefore the Confirmation Service comes next to the Catechism.

But we will not now go into the subject of Confirmation generally. We will take a point, rather, rising out of the Confirmation Service, than strictly belonging to it, —I mean, the question of the religious character and religious position of young people.

I say, this question arises out of the Confirmation Service. Each Confirmation sees some of our young people, just rising into life, come and make solemn profession of their faith,—solemn promises about their lives ; ask a blessing from God on their religious service, and obtain that blessing, if they ask in faith. The service for Confirmation is a witness on the part of the Church, that God expects the hearts and lives of all young people, and gives special strength to enable them to stand, just at the most trying time of their lives.

Let us consider, first, what the real actual state of the case is amongst ourselves ; how far the call from God is answered among us. Then we will compare that state with things as they ought to be ; with what God's Word requires, and what the services of the Church point to. Now, if any one who knows any thing of our country villages were asked to say who were the least godly, the most irreligious, thoughtless, and careless people amongst us, he would answer, (wherever he lived, it would matter little,) he would answer, that of course the young people *were the least godly* in his village, because they are so in *every village ; that young men, especially, were generally*

ungodly ; that a God-seeking young man was a very uncommon thing in his parts. Of course we all know that it is so ; but we ought not to sit down contented, and think that it must be so ; that it cannot be helped ; that things will right themselves in time ; that the ungodly and careless young man will, after a time, become a steady and perhaps religious old man. I say, we have no right so to excuse a state of things quite contrary to what God would have it,—quite contrary to what it might be : but we should rather try and find out what the reasons are which have occasioned this evil, and whether there be any thing at all that we can do towards curing it.

No doubt there are special temptations which assail young people ; no doubt there are many things to draw them away from God, from which other people are free. Passions are strong and powerful ; difficult to put under and control ; life is just beginning, and they are healthy, and free from care, and spirits run high ; and they have got to think that God's service would be a check and hindrance, and make them dull and uncomfortable. They have not yet learned what it is to be sad, and weary of life, and to know in such an hour of weariness that it is God only who can give them rest. No question young people have their own special temptations to ungodliness ; to become careless, and worldly, and irreligious. Of course no one doubts this ; but this tells us of a duty which we owe to the young, and which fathers and mothers owe to their children, and which fathers and mothers almost always neglect. I mean, that when those with whom we have to do are in special danger, special need of help, special temptation, our hand ought to be over them, our voice raised to warn them, *our eyes careful to watch them. But in real practice,*

we do exactly the contrary to all this ; nay, more, we very often are stumbling-blocks in the way, and ourselves lead them into sin.

For example, about young children, we see parents often careful and thoughtful ; anxious that they should be taught, put in the right way, kept from evil, checked, and corrected. But as they get a few years older, this care seems to vanish. The little child is brought to church carefully, but the grown boy is let to go his own way ; the little child is taught to behave reverently and respectfully when he is in church, but the older boy is allowed to go and sit with other thoughtless companions, and while the father and mother are devout and reverent in one part of the church, the boy is mocking God by irreverence and ungodliness in another. It is quite true that young people have their special temptations, but they are aggravated and made worse by this sort of neglect. I want to show that, just as you owe a duty in the things of God towards your younger children, so do you owe a like duty to the older ones ; and if the one are in circumstances of greater trial, your duty becomes all the greater, and not the less.

I know the answer to such words as these which rises to your lips. Young children are easy to manage, and old ones difficult ; young children are constantly under your eye, older ones are very much out of sight. Yes, but all this is no real answer : it does not get rid of your duty. And if it be difficult, it is not impossible. Some things, at least, you might do, which you do not. For instance, one of the great reasons why young people,—young men especially,—are ungodly, is, because when *they are in church they are ill-behaved, irreverent, seldom kneeling when they ought to kneel, or repeating prayers*

when they ought to repeat them. Such conduct in God's house on Sunday, must needs bring down God's curse upon them during the week: and that curse does fall, and makes them hard and profane. Now, this sort of conduct might be altogether prevented by every single father or mother. You cannot make them godly at heart, but you can prevent their being ungodly in outward act. If your children sat by you in church always, and as a regular rule, your good example would guide them, instead of the mischievous, wicked examples of the idle boys with whom they generally are. Surely this is a very simple, easy rule, and yet hardly any will keep it! I am quite sure that to make such a family rule, would bring down a blessing upon your family. I am quite sure that if it were generally kept in our parishes, it would be the saving of very much profane ungodliness that dishonours God among us.

Once again: Our young people come to God's altar and are confirmed year by year, and few ever come to that altar again at the time of Holy Communion; or they come once, and that is all. And if we come to ascertain what are the hindrances and difficulties, we find, in most cases, that the parents themselves have something to do with keeping them away. You tell them that they are not old enough yet; that they had better wait; that their time for the Communion will come when they are a little older. And so the first rising desire after God is checked by those very people who ought to be the first to encourage and fan the spark, and the young heart gets hardened for want of God's blessing, and the time does *not* come; and the irreligious, ungodly boy, made irreligious by his own parents, grows up into the cold, worldly *man*. These are but two cases which I have spoken of



here ; your own consciences will tell you how often you have sinned, and are still sinning in these matters. God would have our young people His servants : and see how many are the servants of sin. God would have them His from their youth up : we tell them it will be time enough when youth is over. We tell them they may wait till they are older before they need seek God's Presence : but God's own Word stands written against you. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

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## LECTURE XVI.

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: MARRIAGE.

EPHES. v. 31, 32.

"FOR THIS CAUSE SHALL A MAN LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL BE JOINED UNTO HIS WIFE, AND THEY TWO SHALL BE ONE FLESH. THIS IS A GREAT MYSTERY : BUT I SPEAK CONCERNING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH."

IMMEDIATELY after the Confirmation Service in the Prayer Book, comes the Office for the Solemnization of Matrimony. Few words of Holy Writ are more full of deep mystery and wonder than the passage above out of the Epistle to the Ephesians. It tells how in matters which men count of common every-day occurrence, there lies beneath a deep and sacred meaning, shadowing forth *things heavenly* and spiritual.

*When man was in Paradise, holy, pure, and undefiled,*

then it was that the ordinance of marriage began. Even then it was not good for him to be alone: a help meet was found for him. So you will remember the first exhortation in the Marriage Service tells us. Man fell; sin came in; and marriage like other holy things was lowered, corrupted, degraded; still as an ordinance of God, it retained all through the worst times somewhat of the first meaning, and the first holiness wherewith God had blessed it. Even heathen people in very dark days felt and believed that marriage was a holy thing, a religious bond. And He Who came to restore in men the image of God which had been well-nigh blotted out, has unfolded plainly to us what the heathen and even the Jew and Patriarch could only feel after and guess at, that the marriage bond between man and woman was holy and blessed, because it was the shadow on earth of a higher and purer union in heaven. The heavenly Bridegroom and the unspotted Bride are, you will remember, the names by which the LORD JESUS CHRIST and His Church are known in Scripture. God has hallowed and blessed our earthly unions by thus likening them to the heavenly. What an awful holiness does such language show that there is in Christian marriage; what a good right does it give us to call matrimony, as our Prayer Book does, a holy rite.

See then in the first place how marked a difference there is between Scripture language and the common language which men hold about marriage. Men speak of it as a common earthly thing—a convenient arrangement—a matter in which every man has himself to please, and his own likings or his own plans to consult—and that is all. That is, men speak and feel about God's ordinance as about a mere earthly arrangement, until in-

deed it become very little more to them, and our marriages instead of being hallowed by the Word of God, and by prayer, are unblest, unhallowed, unsanctified, because God's service has no place in them. And yet, my brethren, our own Marriage Service, did we but listen to it, would tell a very different tale. Let us go back to the Prayer Book, and learn a lesson from our own Church. First comes the exhortation, setting before you the blessedness and the holiness of marriage. You are reminded of the divine institution, of the mysterious holiness, of the sanctification of marriage by the LORD'S Presence in Cana of Galilee. Then come words about the sin of profaning so holy a thing by an unholy use of it. To take in hand a holy ordinance of GOD carelessly, unadvisedly, in a worldly, unthinking spirit, must be sin against GOD'S institution, must be forgetfulness of the true uses of holy marriage. Those uses are holy, pure, and blessed ; as such, a blessing from GOD is on our unions. Christian fellowship in GOD'S service, help, comfort, blessing, support should flow out of Christian marriage ; but our marriages must be Christian and pure and lawful, for such blessing to follow on them.

So the exhortation in the Prayer Book speaks. And then follows an awful charge to those who are about to enter the holy estate ; a charge against entering upon so blessed a state without solemnly questioning ourselves as to the lawfulness of our union. Words they are so solemn, that one would think they would come home to the heart of every unthinking man or woman, who comes carelessly to GOD'S Altar. It warns you that no marriage is lawful or blessed, which is not entered into as GOD'S Word doth allow ; that those who are joined together otherwise, are not lawfully joined, have no right

to expect a blessing. This charge of course means in the first place, to warn us against a marriage which is contrary to the law of the land, or the law of the Church ; but I think it has a deeper meaning than this too. For it speaks of God's Word, and as God's Word goes higher and deeper than any human law, or any Church law can go, there may be many a marriage lawful in the eye of the one which is far from lawful in the eye of the other.

A lawful marriage in God's sight is one which is undertaken for His glory, and to His praise, and honour. God's Word even so speaks. The Bible tells us that some people, some men and women are called to a single life, and some to a married ; that some will find they can serve God best as single people, but that most can serve him best as married people. But in both cases alike the end is to be the same,—God's service and our own soul's good are to be the end and object in view. Man and woman were joined together in Paradise to serve God in a state of innocence together : man and woman in this renewed world, in the Church of CHRIST are joined together for the same purpose, God's honour and the mutual advantage of each other in spiritual things. To speak otherwise, or to feel otherwise, is to lower and degrade our Christian position. Heathen people in whom the true knowledge of God has been almost lost, have so lowered it ; have made marriage a mere matter of convenient arrangement ; sometimes have got rid of marriage altogether. And so soon as we forget the holy and religious character, which CHRIST has given to the union of His people, we do the same. God has made marriage a holy mystery ; but we may make it a common thing.

We will not go further in the Marriage Service just now ; it is all through full of lessons ; but at the root of its lessons lies this first and chief truth, that marriage is a solemn dedication of two persons, joined in one spirit, to the service of Almighty God. This is the foundation of all Christian union. All marriage otherwise taken in hand is something lower, and therefore something less blessed than God would have marriage to be. I think this one truth will give you all much to reflect upon, much to repent of, when you compare things as they are amongst us, with things as CHRIST and CHRIST'S Church would have them. The holier and the purer a mystery, the deeper must be the guilt of defiling and profaning it. Should we wonder at marriages being so often unblest, unhappy, fruitful in misery ? Not at all, if we reflect upon the way in which marriages are begun, in a worldly, careless, ungodly spirit. No,—rather should we wonder at His infinite goodness, who brings so much good out of so much evil, and blesses so largely what has oftentimes been undertaken so carelessly. His hand is over us, when that hand is little thought of ; He is guiding us aright when we would guide ourselves wrong ; we choose out a worldly path for ourselves, but He turns its direction and bends it heavenwards, making it lead us whither we little thought, into the narrow path which carries us to Himself.

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## LECTURE XVII.

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: MARRIAGE.

1 CORINTHIANS VII. 16.

“WHAT KNOWEST THOU, O WIFE, WHETHER THOU SHALT SAVE THY HUSBAND? OR HOW KNOWEST THOU, O MAN, WHETHER THOU SHALT SAVE THY WIFE?”

WE go on with the Marriage Service. We began it in the last Lecture, but only spoke just of the beginning. For it was needful, before we could learn any lesson at all from marriage, or the Marriage Service, that we should be taught that the union of man and woman was an ordinance blessed of God; that Matrimony was a holy thing, and a religious act. If this truth be once fixed in our mind, the service, as I said before, is full of lessons; lessons about neglected duties and forfeited blessings.

S. Paul, in the place in the Epistle to the Corinthians from which the text comes, was speaking about the duty which a Christian man owed to an unchristian wife, or a Christian woman to an unchristian husband. In those days, when men were being brought for the first time out of heathen false worship to the knowledge of the truth, it would, of course, often happen that a man would become a Christian before his wife did, or a woman before her husband. It would so happen that there were many great and serious religious differences in families, which often gave much trouble and offence. S. Paul says that he would not at all have such people separate. The husband owed a duty still to the wife, though she was still an unbeliever, and the wife to the husband. The true line of action would be, to live on with one another,

to show how Christian faith worked in them such virtues as even heathens would know, and value, and respect; to show how meekness, obedience, love, quietness, order, sobriety, all followed out of Christian belief. Such an example would win many a soul to CHRIST; but if the bond of marriage were violently torn asunder, the deserted husband or wife would be almost certainly lost to the Church. They were to live on together, the faithful Christian ever striving in meekness of wisdom to bring over to the truth the person whom he loved best in the world; ever hoping that GOD would please to move her heart, as He had already moved his. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. . . . For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband; or what knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife!"

Even then, between heathen people, S. Paul looked upon the marriage bond as a religious bond, and the duties of marriage as holy duties. Much more must it be so among Christian people. See how the Church Service encircles the whole ceremony of marriage with a solemnity and an order which can belong only to a religious duty done in GOD's sight. Each person is asked in turn to pledge their word in GOD's sight and GOD's hearing, that they will cleave each to other all their life through: the husband to comfort, honour, and keep; the wife to obey and to serve. Each plight their troth: that is, pledge their solemn and truthful promise to all this, in GOD's sight; the ring is the sign, bond, and pledge of the promise. The declaration of the Priest at GOD's altar that they are man and wife together, never to be separated, except by GOD's act; the blessing in the name

of the Holy TRINITY,—all alike bear witness to the greatness of the act which has been just done ; to its religious character, and its deep responsibility.

It is so that, by the act of God's Church, marriage is sanctified and blessed. You go forth from the church with new vows and new duties : and those vows and duties, because they have been undertaken in God's Presence, you can in no way shake off. They have been undertaken with all the solemnity of an oath : for every promise made as in God's Name, and as before Him, is an oath. The love, then, between wife and husband ; their duty and care over each other ; the obedience of the wife, the support of the husband ; all the duties that follow out of marriage ; the ordering of the household ; the care of the children ; and all the many things that make the difference between a good wife and a bad one, a good husband and a bad, are all sacred duties, undertaken in God's sight, to be done in God's sight : and we shall have to answer at the Day of Judgment as to whether we have neglected those duties or no.

See, then, on the one side, the view which your Prayer Book would have you take of the position and duties of husband and wife, and then go out of the Church, and see how the lives of Christian people come up to this standard and pattern. Love, obedience, comfort, support,—these are the words which Holy Scripture and the Prayer Book use when they would set before us the condition of married people. Christian union is to be a step heavenwards ; a help on the road towards God. The life of married people a walk together in a Christian path,—the husband seeking to save the wife, the wife to save the husband. Different,—far different, the actual life of Christian people. Jarring and discord ; disputings

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and complainings ; jealousy and variance,—these are what really mark the married life. Homes disorderly and comfortless ; children mismanaged and unruly ; little love, little obedience, little forbearance : even where things are no worse, bickerings, and unkind words. Is it not so ? Are we not told that such things cannot be helped, and must needs be ? Yes, it always must be with godless and irreligious men. It must needs be that offences come ; but woe unto the man by whom the offence cometh. I say, that every such breaking of the law of Christian love in a family, is the breaking of a solemn oath, taken before God in His Church. I say, that all such jarring and discord could be avoided : because the blessing of God's HOLY SPIRIT is given you in the blessing of His Church at marriage, and that SPIRIT would lead you, if you would be led, into peace and love. The Marriage Service stands written as a witness against all ungodly homes ; all noisy, quarrelsome firesides ; all jealousy and discord, where there should be confidence, and trust, and concord.

I will, in conclusion, point out to you the reason why the practice of Christian people is so very different from their calling, and from their promises. The first reason is, because marriages are so generally formed in an ungodly and unchristian spirit. Take the multitude of our marriages ; look at them with the eye of a Christian man, and say whether they be such as we can reasonably ask for a blessing upon. Begun in sin, for the most part, they go on in sin, and sin marks their whole course. There is no greater stain and blot on the character of the English people far and wide, than the way in which Christian marriage is polluted. Unchastity is one of our greatest and most crying abominations. And we all are

answerable in some measure for it, so long as we excuse and speak lightly of sins accursed of God ; so long as we give things wrong names, and call them misfortunes and accidents, when they are really abominations and crimes.

Next,—a reason which follows out of the first,—our solemn Marriage Service itself is little thought of and little understood by most of those that hear it. It is one of the most painful offices that a Clergyman has to do, to read words so solemn, and which ought to be so touching, and to see, meanwhile, so little thought,—so much irreverence and want of devotion in those who hear. Words are repeated unmeaningly ; vows plighted carelessly ; promises made thoughtlessly. How many of those who have made these promises and vows had any deep thought of their meaning when they took them ? Is there not need that we know something more of our Prayer Book, when vows so solemn have passed our lips unheeded and forgotten ?

And once again : The life afterwards is like the beginning. Marriages irreligiously begun, are oftentimes followed by a lifetime of ungodliness. It is only of God's infinite mercy that sometimes a man is struck by a sense of his own careless, ungodly life, and is recalled to a sense of his vows forgotten and broken. Be sure the only true remedy for all our home troubles is to be found where the Prayer Book points. Marriage, and marriage duties, must be looked upon as hallowed and blessed of God,—as holy and religious acts. Then, and not till then, will such duties be discharged at all : for then, and not till then, will they be done heartily, as unto the LORD.

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## LECTURE XVIII.

## THE CHURCHING OF WOMEN.

S. LUKE II. 22.

“THEY BROUGHT HIM TO JERUSALEM, TO PRESENT HIM TO THE LORD.”

THE Christian Church, looking upon her own body as one large Christian family, all having interest in and love for one another, has provided, as I showed you before, that all the congregation of each parish shall be called upon to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep ; that special mercies to each individual, or each family, shall be the subject of special thanksgiving in the Church by the whole congregation ; that special sorrows should be the subject of intercession and prayer by the whole congregation. The Church would have all her little ones taken into the Church by Baptism publicly ; all her departed members committed to the earth in one common resting-place publicly ; to teach us that, selfish though our hearts be, and oftentimes disposed to look upon even our religious acts as private, separate duties, that all CHRIST'S members have common joys and common sorrows ; that as we are all members of one body, we should mourn, and joy, and pray, and give thanks as one body, each for each.

Next to the Marriage Service, which we spoke of last, we will take the Service for Thanksgiving after Child-birth,—which we generally call the Churching Service. It does not come next the Marriage Service in the Prayer Book, but the subject of the one is so closely knit up

with the subject of the other, that we should not do well to separate them. The Churching Service is a very short one: and it is, perhaps, one which we least think about, and very little understand.

You will recollect that when Adam first fell into sin, through the temptation of his wife, both alike fell under a curse. The curse upon the woman was marked and special, "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." And as sin has perpetuated itself in the world through Adam's fall, so has the curse upon the woman been handed down from generation to generation. The pains and perils of childbirth are the inheritance of sin,—the special memorial to all women of the first transgression and its consequences. Sorrow in conception is the inheritance of all women, and will be till sin departs from the earth.

But with the curse, came a blessing too; with the condemnation of death, came also a promise of life. Mark here the wonderful dealing of God in His mercy with His people: in Adam all die; but in Adam's Son, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, shall all be made alive. Through woman came sin, when Eve ate the fruit; through woman came the SAVIOUR from sin, when the Virgin at Nazareth bowed her head to God's message; "Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to thy word." The serpent was the harbinger and messenger of death; the angel Gabriel of life and peace. Sorrow in conception was the fruit of the one, but the saving of life in the midst of that sorrow the fruit of the other. And so S. Paul, calling to mind the woman's transgression, adds to it also a promise of mercy; "The woman, being deceived, was in the transgression: notwithstanding, she shall be

saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness, with sobriety." (1 Tim. ii. 14.)

The Church, then, in appointing a special Service for Thanksgiving after Childbirth, would direct your thoughts specially to these two points—the punishment of sin, and the merciful deliverance from it: the pain and peril reminding you of the one, your safety after that pain reminding you of the other. You will recollect that among the Jews, God's own people, there was a special Service appointed of God, as there is in our Church now. The verses in S. Luke tell us of the blessed Virgin Mary coming when the days of purification were accomplished, and offering her gifts. Those gifts were tokens of thanksgiving and gratitude, even as our Service is; only they were offered according to the rules of the Church of those days, which were different from our rules. But the same custom which the Church of Israel had, the Church of CHRIST has retained, and teaches her children that the first place to resort to is God's house, and the first service should be a service of thanksgiving and blessing.

Let us go to the Service itself, and we shall see what its teaching is. We begin with one of two Psalms,—both of them speaking the same thought; only that the first is rather an acknowledgment of past mercies, the second rather a confession of duties. But both go together: all sense of duty springs from a sense of love; all resolution for the future springs from a sense of God's presence with us in the past: and, in like manner, no gratitude is real which is not abiding,—which does not prove itself by a holy life and greater devotion to God. The Psalm is taken up by a supplication for God's mercy; the LORD's Prayer, in which all the people join; and a special prayer on behalf of the body and soul of her

who is returning thanks: a prayer that she may show her thankfulness by earnestness of Christian living; and having been delivered from a great temporal peril, may be delivered from the far greater perils of sin, and be partaker of everlasting life, through JESUS CHRIST:

The Service is a very short one; it adds a very few minutes to our afternoon prayers. But there are several lessons in it which perhaps we have seldom thought of. For example, it takes for granted that all women after childbirth come here to church with earnest, grateful hearts, and sincere intention to serve God truly and faithfully. If you look at the Rubric at the end of the Service, you will see it said, "it is convenient that the woman receive the Holy Communion:" and the Psalm itself used in the Service, uses the same language, "What reward shall I give unto the LORD for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? I will receive the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the LORD." Can we say that the act of all among us when they come to church after childbirth, is a religious act? I fear not. Many come as to any other customary and usual ceremony: it would be very far from respectable, very discreditable, not to come. It is not much more than this with some. But the Church means it to be a solemn act of worship; an act of thanksgiving, devotion, and praise. It would have you come with the recollection of God's mercy fresh in your minds, and say, This life, which my God hath spared, I will devote more truly to my LORD's glory; the peril I have gone through, shall remind me of my sin; my safety shall remind me of my preservation from the snares of the Devil. This new act of mercy, is another claim on my duty and my love.

This is one part of the teaching of this Service. Another,

quite as much forgotten, is the lesson it teaches you about duties as parents. The Psalm reminds you whose your children are ; who gives them you ; for whom you are bound to bring them up. We call our children our own, and think we may use them as we will. God's Word speaks differently. "Children and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift that cometh of the LORD." God's gift ; God's lending to us, which He will claim again. Would we inherit the blessing, we must learn the lesson. The Psalm speaks—as all Scripture does speak—of children as a blessing : "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them : " but experience would oftentimes tell a different tale. Why should God's blessings be so often no blessings at all ? God's heritage and gift, why should it be full of trouble ? Because we forget they are God's gift, and make our children first our toys and playthings, and then our conveniences ; till they turn, in the end, to be our curses.

The Church would remind Christian mothers, each time they come with a renewed thanksgiving for safety, that each fresh child brings with it fresh duties. If they did not forget those duties, their labour would not be lost ; their blessings would not be forfeited. God would build up our houses, and keep our cities, and give us in our children and families the blessing of peace.

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## LECTURE XIX.

## THE VISITATION OF THE SICK.

S. JAMES v. 14, 15.

“IS ANY SICK AMONG YOU? LET HIM CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH; AND LET THEM PRAY OVER HIM, ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD: AND THE PRAYER OF FAITH SHALL SAVE THE SICK, AND THE LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP; AND IF HE HAVE COMMITTED SINS, THEY SHALL BE FORGIVEN HIM.”

WE spoke of the Church as a family, with common joys and common sorrows; we saw how this thought runs through all our services, so far as we have gone in them hitherto; how they taught us to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; how the Church counts no man's sorrow and no man's joy, no man's salvation, and no man's sin either to be a mere private matter touching himself, but would have all her members take part in the blessedness, and strive after the saving of the whole and each several part, even as the holy angels of God, who joy over one sinner that repenteth.

You will recollect that we have seen further, how the whole life of a Christian in all its relations and all its parts is counted by the Church as holy, and consecrated to God—nothing common or unclean, since the LORD Jesus, by His Incarnation, hallowed and sanctified all our earthly life. We saw how the Prayer Book testifies to this in its several services, giving a holy and religious character to what so many of us count as common worldly acts; the service for Infant Baptism, the Marriage Service, the Churching Service, all taught us the same lesson,



showed us how indeed the Prayer Book is a witness to the continuing abiding presence of CHRIST with His members in their families, and their homes, and their daily wants, as well as in the Church and at the altar.

All this was felt far more plainly and more deeply in the days when S. James wrote his Epistle than it is now. No doubt persecution and trouble strengthened very much the feeling that all Christians were one family, all bound together in love. No doubt wars and rumours of wars, such as disturbed the face of the earth, made the assurance of their LORD's coming, and so also of His continued abiding presence more real to them than it is with us. But that presence is ours still, as truly and as surely; and this is the office of the Church and of the Prayer Book specially, to witness for Him and to plead for Him in the midst of worldliness, and forgetfulness, and neglect.

The service that we now come to takes up the thread which has been running through all our lectures hitherto. We have seen the Church hallowing and blessing from the beginning of the natural life in infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, all the life through. Baptism, the Catechism, Confirmation, Marriage, the Thanksgiving Service have carried us so far. We now go a step further on, and see the Church in her office of comforter in the day of trial and sorrow. The Prayer Book gives us two services for such times; the Visitation Office, and the Office for the Communion of the Sick. We will take the first, and read in it a lesson as to our misuse and our neglect of it.

You will observe first, that S. James testifies to us in these verses of his Epistle to the practice of his own times, the practice, that is, of the Apostles, who had seen the LORD. The sick were a special care to the Apostolic Church;

separated from the congregation indeed in outward presence, still, because they were one in CHRIST, they were to lack none of the blessings which union with the congregation gives. "Prayer was made unceasingly of the Church," for them; the ministration of the Church came home to them to their own sick beds; the blessed graces of the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST were ministered to them; there was a special and earnest care exercised over them, as over those who might shortly have run their time. It was to them that the thought and care of the elders (the ministers, that is) of the Church were to be particularly bestowed. "Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him."

Our Church then, in her service for the Visitation of the Sick, has exactly followed the Apostles' rule and the Apostles' example. Turn to the Visitation Service in your Prayer Books, and see how this is. See first, how the office begins with the message of peace to the sick man, and those about him in the assurance of the LORD's presence and the FATHER's love. Next follows a confession of sin, not of the sick man's sin in particular, but of our common sinfulness, the iniquities of us all, calling to mind how all sickness and suffering is the fruit of sin, and a continual reminder of its presence. Go on further, and you will read Special Prayers for the particular sufferer; a prayer for blessing on the suffering; exhortations to submissiveness and patience; examination of faith; encouragement to special confession of particular offences; a message of gracious assurance of pardon at the mouth of God's minister after such confession; a psalm of penitence and prayer; and concluding words of assurance and blessing. Let us read here the view which

the Church takes of the condition and treatment and ground of hope, which all her children should have in their sickness, and then for a moment compare that view with our own practice and our own use of the ministrations of our clergy.

Now, in the first place, this service plainly supposes several conditions in our sick people, which in practice we do not find among them. The Prayer Book supposes that all the Church's sick children are fit and ready to join in such a service as this is, and drink in its blessing and its comfort. Of course it was never meant that the prayers here set down should be the only prayers used by the sick, or by the minister with them; but it was meant that this should be the kind of ministration at the sick bed, that the sick man should be able to enter into and value a service of this kind. For example, confession of sins to Almighty God is looked upon here as an habitual act, and the ground of all hope of pardon; special confession of particular sins to God's ministers is spoken of as the appointed way of relieving a burdened and a troubled conscience; a consciousness of the presence of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the healer and the comforter of sorrow and of pain, is of course supposed before we can bid the sufferers turn to Him in this their need. In other words, the Church deals with the sick as those who have been faithful to their blessings and privileges in health, not as with those who have to begin from the beginning, and to be awakened to all thought of God at all in the moments of suffering or in the hour of death. She goes to one of her sick members as to one who in days of strength was found worshipping in her courts, who has had his end before him as that whereunto he has been going, who has lived as one who shall give account before

the throne of God for the deeds done in the body ; to such an one, now stricken down by sickness, perhaps with the death-stroke on him, the Church can come with her Visitation Service and speak words of peace and assurance and hope. To such a one she can point to the LORD JESUS, as Him, in whose blood the sick man has trusted in health, to whom he may now turn in the hour of trial.

We all know how different the visitation of the sick is in real practice to what the Prayer Book would have it ; how often we can speak no such words of comfort or peace ; how often we cannot bid the sick man turn to One whom he has never known in health ; but we have to begin from the very beginning to teach, when the mind is hardly able to receive any teaching ; to exhort to turn, when turning seems well-nigh impossible ; to call for confession of guilt from one who has never confessed all his life through, has never felt sin within him, has never in his life asked God for pardon. We all know well how there are those who with hardly any thought of God in their health, look through some work of the minister, they know not what, to be reconciled, pardoned, and forgiven in the hour of sickness.

Observe then that the Prayer Book speaks no such language as this ; its service supposes the sick man to have been a God-seeking man in his day of opportunity and strength. Surely then, if the service which we have been speaking of have much of comfort in it, it has, rightly read, much of warning also ; if it abound in consolation to the sick, it abounds also in warning to the healthy ; it tells how no one has any encouragement from the Church any more than from Holy Scripture to put off thought and turning till the hour of sickness be on him. The

Visitation Office is no office for the conversion of the hardened, but an office of support and comfort for the sick member of CHRIST. No encouragement held out to trust in a change at the end, to a death-bed repentance. GOD only knoweth how very few such seeming repentances are in His sight repentances at all. GOD of His mercy give us all grace to become His now, while it is called to-day, ere the night cometh in which no man can work; GOD give us grace to cleave to Him in the day of our strength, and then in the hour of weakness His mercy and truth will not forsake us.

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## LECTURE XX.

### THE BURIAL SERVICE: THE CHURCH OUR COMFORTER.

1 THESS. IV. 18.

“COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS.”

You will recollect that we were considering in succession the several occasional Services of the Prayer Book, trying to see whether we could not make them more real and intelligible to ourselves, and so more full of blessing to ourselves than they have been hitherto; trying to find what the special teaching of the Prayer Book is touching Sacraments and other means of grace, touching spiritual ministrations and ghostly comfort. We had in our last lecture got as far as the end of the Office for the Communion of the Sick; we have yet one very important Service to speak of, which may well occupy us for two lectures more.

I pointed out to you the order and arrangement of our Prayer Book Services; we have followed almost exactly that order in our lectures; we have seen how the Church first joins us to CHRIST in the one Sacrament; how she continues and strengthens that union in the other Sacrament; how she has a thoughtful care for the teaching of the young; for the strengthening and blessing of the taught in Confirmation; how she blesses the whole life in all its relations, hallows the marriage bed, comforts the sick room, ministers the pledges and channels of grace to her weak and dying children; from birth to hoar hairs; from the font to the hour when the soul passes forth, the Church is our support, strength, and guide. One holy office yet remains. When the spirit has departed, the Church leaves not the work incomplete, but with prayer and thanksgiving commits to the holy ground that fleshly tabernacle wherein the SPIRIT of CHRIST and of GOD has dwelt in life.

The Order for the Burial of the Dead is the Office yet remaining. We may look at it in several points of view,—in all, it is full of teaching. Comfort, warning, assurance,—all are to be found there; and as these lessons come in succession in the Office itself, we will take them in this order. The first thought is then a thought of comfort,—the second division speaks rather in a note of warning,—the concluding prayers are full of promise, assurance, and blessing.

“Comfort one another with these words.” So spake the Apostle S. Paul, in comfort to the Thessalonian people concerning those who sleep in JESUS. He bids them sorrow not as men without hope; he tells of union again in the day of the return of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; of His bringing again with Him them that have fallen

asleep in His faith and fear. Sorrow not as men without hope ; nay, is not death itself the pledge and seal of all hope ? They that are gone are gone to their rest ; that rest only a passage to life and immortality. Death hath lost its sting ; nay, much more, it is turned into life, and joy, and triumph. Comfort one another with these words.

So the Apostle spoke, and so the Church of CHRIST in her Burial Office meets the body of her departed child at the churchyard gate with like words of peace and joy. Three sentences out of GOD'S Word begin our Service ; the first out of S. John : our LORD'S teaching to Martha at Bethany, when in the depth of her sorrow over her brother Lazarus, He told of the mighty working of His own Incarnation, through which all flesh should one day rise again to life. " I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and he that believeth in Me shall never die." Next a word of hope spoken by a Saint of the olden time : Job telling of a living Redeemer, of a Resurrection to come, of a SAVIOUR whom his eye should see. Through a glass darkly he saw ; yet even then a saint of God could tell that there was joy in dying, and hope in the tomb. And then once more a word of S. Paul's, and a word of the same Patriarch Job continued, a word of resignation under GOD'S hand. " We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out : the LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD."

We will stop here : these sentences are specially words of comfort : let us stop a moment and see what the lesson they teach is. If a Patriarch in the old time with so *little unfolding* as there was then of the hope and im-

mortality of man's body and soul; if a saint of the days of Job could in the midst of mortal suffering triumph over suffering and look onward to a SAVIOUR manifest in the flesh, how much more we who have seen Him nigh; we who can keep Easter, and Sunday which is an Easter over again every week, how ought we to be able to look onward with joy and comfort, and see the Redeemer standing near us in the hour of our departure hence. If the sister of Lazarus at Bethany had that faith which made her able to speak at the tomb of her brother of the Resurrection at the last day, how much more *we*, to whom the LORD has spoken not by word only, but by His own blessed act. Martha spoke words of hope before the LORD had fully unfolded Himself to her; —have we not the like hope, we who live in the fulness of the faith in the Resurrection? Surely if there were in us that earnestness of belief which the Prayer Book supposes when it uses these words of comfort, very different would be our feeling in looking onward to our own departure; very different the sorrow wherewith we mourn over those that sleep in JESUS.

And once again: the use of these words of comfort as well as many other words that come in different parts of the Burial Service, indicates to us two things. First, that the Burial Service is intended for faithful Christian people; and next, what follows out of this, that none have a right to take home to themselves the blessed comfort and promises, which we hear read, except those who are believing in CHRIST with earnest hearts and living up to their belief. We have much need to notice this. You all know that the Church forbids the use of Christian burial altogether to all unbaptized persons, and to all who lay violent hands on themselves. You know



also that we very often do use the Service, where a man has led a very doubtful life, and died with very little sign of repentance or of faith. Why? because we must needs judge with all charity, and hope even against hope, that there may be yet some faith, and some repentance, though it does not show to man's eye. But when we turn to ourselves, and look inwards, we have no right to use any such charity at all. If we say there is comfort and promise in these words; yes, so there is; but for whom? "He that believeth in Me, shall never die," says our LORD. "Them that sleep in JESUS," says S. Paul, "shall God bring with Him." Are we of those that believe, of those that hope hereafter to sleep in Him? Were we called away to-night, have we good hope that we should wake up after His likeness? To such the Prayer Book speaks words of comfort and blessing; let us dwell upon those and rest in those this evening. Warning and exhortation come afterwards; but these are words of peace. They tell of rest in the grave, of peace in death, of a deathless life, of an endless immortality. Meet and fitting words to welcome for the last time into CHRIST'S Church, one who has taken delight to walk those courts, and worship Him Who is the Resurrection and the Life Himself; for they tell of his admission into higher courts and a nearer presence; of the earthly put off and the heavenly put on; of mortality swallowed up of life; of an imperfect and faltering service exchanged for perfect adoration and angels' songs, amid the blessed company of those who have known Him Who sitteth on the Throne for their hope here, and have found Him to be their Light and their Salvation and Glory for ever,

## LECTURE XXI.

## THE BURIAL SERVICE: DEATH OUR WARNING.

S. MATTHEW XXIV. 44.

"BE YE ALSO READY: FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT, THE SON OF MAN COMETH."

I SAID the Burial Service was a Service of warning, as well as one of comfort. We saw, in our last Lecture, how full the three sentences at the beginning of the Office were of comfort and hope: we go on, this evening, to the next division of the Service,—the warning, and the exhortation. Our first act in the church is the saying of one or both of two Psalms, the 39th and 90th, going before the long Lesson from the Epistle to the Corinthians, which unfolds the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. These two Psalms will suggest our next thought: they lead us to one of the lessons which the solemn act of committing to the earth the body of a departed brother should teach.

Death is our warning; truly and rightly listened to, it is the mightiest and most powerful of all teachers. Its lesson comes not to us with the sound of words which may be mistaken, or empty or idle words, but with the solemn voice of a plain, unmistakeable, awful fact. Body and soul were one living man but a few days ago, and now body and soul are parted. What was a living man, has in a moment become lifeless clay: cold, motionless, helpless, ready to turn to corruption. There it stands before us,—a teacher whose voice we *must* listen to; a power which we cannot gainsay or deny; nay, a power which we must all in our turn yield to. Powerful in its

silence far beyond the loudest words; speaking with a true and certain voice, Death has come once more nigh to our doors; has taken away one from our side, for he stood next on GOD's roll, and it was GOD's will that he should go before us. One has been taken, and another left: but to the one left behind the messenger has spoken, and said, "Be thou also ready, ere long thy time also will have come."

Death, then, is a teacher which all men must listen to, which no man can mistake. The heathen, or the unbeliever, or the hardened wicked man may have his eye blinded to all other sights, and his ear deadened to all other sounds; but here to Death, the conqueror of all, they can neither shut the eye nor close the ear. The consolations, the triumphs, the joys of a blessed departure, a man may know nothing about; but the stern, awful fact, that life has fled where life once was, each one must know. And so the Church of CHRIST, while in her Burial Service she speaks words of comfort to the mourner, and words of sure and certain hope about the Resurrection, does not forget to add words of warning also; words which tell of our departure hence; words which warn us to be prepared. There are, indeed, words of blessing over the departed, but there are also words of solemn warning for those who are left behind.

The two Psalms which begin that part of our Burial Service which we read in the Church do this. One or the other we use, or both: and either teaches the same lesson. The one a prayer that GOD will let us know our end, and the number of our days: that is, that He will teach us so to live as to be ready whenever the end comes; a prayer for deliverance from the sins which make us so unfit to go, "Deliver me from all mine offences;"

a prayer for a little more time for amendment and turning, "Spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and be no more seen." The other Psalm tells the same tale: it speaks of man as a flower fading, as grass cut down in a day; of years coming quickly to an end, like a tale that is told; a prayer that we may learn to number our days,—that we may consider the shortness of our time, and apply our hearts to high and heavenly wisdom. Very solemn words, brethren, in themselves: but how much more solemn coming, as they do, as part of the last act of service which we can do to a departed brother. We have at once before us the precept and the example; the word of God, and His act also. There lies before us, in his last bed, for the last time within the walls of our church, all that remains of one whom we have loved. His end is come; the number of his days told; his beauty consumed away; cut down like a flower, and withered like grass; the threescore and ten years past; the strength become labour and sorrow; the strength passed away and gone. The precept, I say, and the example,—God's Word, telling of death, and Death itself before us, verifying God's Word, speaking to us as no other preacher can speak, "Be ye also ready, ye know not what a day may bring forth."

Did you ever think of these things, the many times that you have heard the solemn funeral Psalms in this Church? I am afraid that some of us do not think at all of what the Service means, when they are in church. Do we not see, for the most part, that people sit through these Psalms, when they ought to be standing up? You ought to stand up and be following with your mind, if not with your voice, the holy words of mourning and intercession: seeking that the prayer may go up for you:

that the warning may come home to your heart. For oftentimes such warnings as Death, with all its solemn teaching, brings, are very powerless; the recollection of them passes away when the grave is closed over, and the sod replaced. This should not be: surely if at any time our heart has been softened, and our conscience quickened, and our fears awakened, it is at the solemn hour when earth is committed to earth, and dust to dust; each time that we pass by the grave on our way to church, the feeling ought to be revived, and the spark of grace fanned. Woe unto us if it be not so: to have many a good impression made, and each time the good impression wiped out, is the most hardening of all things; it is like the smith's hammer beating the hot iron; each blow hardens and hardens the metal more and more.

And yet with many a one it is so. Death comes to the door, and snatches away one from the home; and there is deep sorrow for an hour, for a week, for a month, and then things go on as they did, and the tears are dried up, and the wound heals; and the good thoughts go too, and the man is no nearer to God than if the warning had never come. How many a one has heard these Psalms oftentimes in the church,—has heard the prayer go up, “So teach us to number our days, that we may incline our hearts unto wisdom,” and yet never has learned to number his own days at all,—to prepare, to turn, to repent! And so the day of his call has come also, and found him unready, unprepared, unexpectant. How great a difference between having a good impression made, and having God's teaching sink deep into our ears! What a difference between good thoughts now and then, and a steady, earnest service of God and waiting for His call!

O that GOD would show us His work ; that He would give us that seeing eye which in the hour of bitterest sorrow can read a lesson, can see a FATHER's hand, can trace a SAVIOUR's love. O that He would show us His work ; make us understand how He is moulding, and fashioning, and fitting us for His own purposes, and for His own blessed kingdom ! O that He would make us to read in all the sudden calls—all the unexpected blows—all the desolation, and decay, and death around us, a call to judgment, an exhortation to watchfulness, an awaking to reality, and true, earnest seeking of Him. "Show Thy servants Thy work ;" make them cease from opposing Thy will ; from rebelling against Thy guidance ; from hardening themselves against Thy fear : and then in this our time, as Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt, show them and their children likewise, the glory of Thine eternal kingdom.

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## LECTURE XXII.

### THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT.

2 S. PETER III. 13.

"WE, ACCORDING TO HIS PROMISE, LOOK FOR NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH, WHEREIN DWELLETH RIGHTEOUSNESS."

WE have been speaking so far of the blessings of which we have been made partakers in the Church of CHRIST here on earth—of the means of grace wherewith the Spirit has so largely blessed those who are walking through this world beneath the shadow of the Cross. We have seen how the Prayer Book and its services testify to us of blessings which we neglect—of graces which we *misuse*—of hopes and glorious promises to which our

eyes are often shut. We have seen how the Prayer Book would teach us that all our life is a thing holy and given to GOD, that our everyday walk is a walk heavenwards, if only we be found in that path where He would have us walk.

All through, from the cradle to the grave, the Church blesses and hallows her children's course. In Baptism she takes them from the world into the bosom of her LORD—from the death which they have inherited from Adam into the life which has been purchased for them by CHRIST. In the Catechism she teaches how childhood is to be sanctified to GOD, by Church training and Christian teaching. In Confirmation she points out how the strength of manhood is to be devoted to holiness of life, how from the same LORD, who claimed us in Baptism, there comes also strength and grace in maturer years to enable us to claim our inheritance. In the Communion Service she teaches from whom it is that spiritual nourishment comes; she bids us again and again come to the LORD JESUS for the spiritual manna, for the living water. In the Marriage Service and the Thanksgiving after Childbirth she reminds us of the holiness of our daily life, of the sacred character of our home duties. In the Visitation Office she bids us look upon life's trials and the weaknesses of the flesh as GOD's merciful dispensations—the gracious training of a FATHER's hand. All through the wilderness of wandering—this troublous and evil world, she would uphold, guide, direct, and bless, by leading us ever in all its course to Him who alone is our shepherd, our guardian, our GOD.

And even there she does not leave us; having guided and blessed us in life, the Church watches over and *blesses us in our death*; testifying even to the last that *this life is only a pilgrimage, and death itself only a*

gate leading onwards to immortality and life. And so as we saw before, the Burial Service with all its solemn words of warning, is withal a service of awful and jubilant triumph. It is not the end, nay, truly it is the beginning—it is not darkness, nay, it is the kindling of light—it is not the extinction, nay, it is the purifying and the cleansing—it is the lying down in peace beneath His wing who maketh us dwell in safety. Solemn indeed and awful are the words wherewith we commit to their resting place the earthly tenements whence the spirit hath flown; for awful and full of mystery is the change that has come over the brother or the sister whom we loved. We know so little, and yet we are conscious there must be so much to know—of the condition, and the happiness, and the rest of those whom God has taken before us. We know so little, and yet our hope is sure and certain, and so we can pray for the speedy coming of that day which shall again join us with those we loved and still love. We can pray that it will please God of His goodness shortly to accomplish the number of His elect and to hasten His kingdom. O that we could indeed realize to ourselves that blessed hope which the Church bids us there speak of! Oh that we could rise to the fulness of the blessing wherewith she there blesses us! Oh that we could really see in that solemn separation which we call death, the opening of a closed door, the admission to blessedness, and joy, and peace!

Surely, there is no one of you have read this book who might not so feel, who might not so believe. I said but now, that we know so very little of that unseen world whither we are walking all of us—we know so little; and yet that little how glorious and how full of consolation! The new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth



righteousness—the tabernacle of GOD fixed among men—the tears wiped away from off all faces—the everlasting city—the Paradise restored—the presence of CHRIST and of GOD. Sure it is this, to which, in her solemn Burial Office the Church bids us look ; surely it is in this that even in the deepest earthly sorrow the Church would have us rest.

And how can we so look, and how can we so rest ? Surely it is only by believing that we shall be of that Church triumphant—that elect company—that body of CHRIST. Of that body we are already members ; admitted in our Baptism ; established in our Confirmation ; fed in the Holy Communion ; cheered, blessed, supported, guided in every step of our earthly life ; ever led onwards, militant indeed, fighting our way, not yet at rest, but ever onward towards that promised land where fighting is over and our crown won.

How is it with us ? how with you who have just come to the end of this book ? Have you ever thought deeply on the blessed and awful truths of which it has spoken ? Have you learned anything here which you knew not before of your privileges as Christian men, as ingrafted members of the LORD's body ? May GOD bless to every one of you the seed so sown ; may GOD give to every one of you a truer knowledge of his own blessings, a keener sense of his own responsibilities. May GOD awaken wider and wider amongst us a more living belief in our calling, and make us know the fulness of those well-known but little understood words, that a Baptized Christian is indeed a "member of CHRIST, a child of GOD, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

